

現実主義勇者の王国再建記

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Re:CONSTRUCTION
THE ELFRIEDEN KINGDOM
TALES OF REALISTIC BRAVE

OVERLAP

A Realist Hero's Kingdom Reconstruction Chronicle

(現実主義勇者の王国再建記)

Volume 01

National Enrichment Arc

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Story Description:

In a world where the Demon King had taken over a fifth of the land. Souma Kazuya (Soma) was summoned to that world as a hero, but the king took a liking to his rich country strong army proposal and somehow handed him the throne. Soma, who had the throne forced upon him, forewent adventure, and together with the talented companions he gathered, went about his nation-building with his realism.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 0: The Hero Doesn't Go On A Journey

Life has its fortunes and its hardships.

I believe these words of the old man of Mito is a wise saying. Life has its mountains and valleys. It is exactly because one climbed over adversity that one could sail down, and if one keeps taking the easy way down one would soon find oneself surrounded by rising slopes. The conclusion is therefore, a person should persevere through life's climbs, but I think different.

This is what I think.

I can walk the level path without any ascents or descents, of moderate pain and moderate comfort.

What I could do, and what I could not do.

What I want to do, and what I don't want to do.

What I want others to do, and what I don't want others to do.

By making sure of all that, I walk, looking for a path that is suitable for who I am at the moment. I live a steady life, without taking unnecessary risks, without collecting the hate of others. There are probably those out there who think "what's so fun about a life without its pains and enjoyments," but please think about it. Regardless of what one wants or doesn't want, life will always have its storms.

Inscrutable are the ways of heaven. Therefore, one should pin the instability down to a level one could control.

That was practically how I live my life.

Calmly analyzing my own personal abilities, limits, surrounding environment, financial state, and relationships, evaluating them not too much, nor too little, without aiming too high or too low..... that is my life.

That way I enjoyed a moderate life, going to a middle school near home, graduating from a so-so private high school, and passing college life at a

not very famous college but still one with a reputation similar to those. If this continued, I would probably lead a not-so-bad college life, gain a not-so-bad employment, and build a not-so-bad household with a not-so-bad partner. People would probably think it's bad, but this is all smooth sailing for me.

However, that life plan of mine was overturned.

It was overturned by this man before my eyes.

“O, Hero! Thou truly hath come to answer our call!”

A middle-aged man with medium build. His age was probably in the 40s or 50s.

He was wearing a red cape as thick as a coat and a golden crown on top of his head.

He stood majestically, yes, no matter how you look, he's a [King].

The young, gentle-looking woman by his side was probably the [Queen].

She was wearing a luxurious dress, and seemed to be around thirty years of age.

I tried examining my surroundings. An overly tall ceiling, marble pillars arranged in lines, and red carpet underneath.

On both sides there were soldiers standing uniformly at attention, and there was a prime-minister-looking man mixed in among them.

It was indubitably a royal palace audience hall... or something like that. Something you see in RPG opening scenes.

The king, the royal palace, then the “O Hero” line I heard a while ago.

Hrm... looks like this is one of “those worlds”.

Be calm as you rush, and widen your view to see the invisible.

I committed every day to walking the flat path. Rushing won't change things for the better, closing my eyes or stopping my ears won't make the reality before me disappear. Therefore I should first come to terms with reality to some extent and gather intelligence. First, we observe.

“W, why that look? Are you angry we called you?”

As I stared in observation, the king said so, hesitantly. Where did your dignity go?

“No, I couldn’t understand the situation. Firstly, would you be kind enough to explain the current situation?”

“Y, you’re a calm one. I’m envious...”

“Ahem.”

“I, it’s nothing!”

The prime minister cleared his throat and the King shrugged with a start. Seeing that exchange, the Queen chuckled and even the guards smiled bitterly. From this chain of exchanges, I can see that the ‘Gentle-looking King’ is really a ‘Gentle King’. He seems to lack ambition for someone at the top of a country, but as a statesman he was probably a kind King loved by his subjects.

At least he doesn’t seem to be one to send the hero to a place of certain death or throw the hero away once he deems him useless, which was a relief. No no, I’ve been reading web novels with stories like that recently, see. Well, Kings like that eventually got the revenge of the heroes who came back at them, though. Reading stories with plots like that was refreshing but if you ask me if I want to experience something like that the answer is a definite no.

Now that I’ve said this much it should be understandable, but I recognize that I was the target of this king’s so-called [Hero Summoning]. Averting my eyes won’t change the situation. Therefore, any clichéd thoughts like “I wonder if this is a dream” is a waste of time.

“So? Is the Demon King coming to attack or something?”

“You’re quick to understand. It is as you say.”

“...”

“O, oi, what happened, Hero. To suddenly bury your head in your arms.”

“No... don’t mind it. I just felt a little dizzy.”

That's weird. This is a clichéd development but it's hurting my head.

Seeing how the Demon King is coming to attack he sure had the time to call a Hero, wait....

“Apologies. Can you please explain the situation.”

“I, is that so? Then I shall explain.”

Thus began the King's “Tedious Explanation of the World straight out of an old RPG opening”.

Firstly, about this world itself, this world consists of the extra-large continent Randia and countless islands of all sizes. In the Randia continent there are many countries small and large, and besides humans, there are various races of therianthrope, elves, dwarves, ogres, and dragonewts living there. Among the countries there are ones where the races coexisted but there are ones that treat their own race favorably and ban other races, or ones where every race was all “equal under the one emperor”, these countries raised their hegemonies and warred, but due to a terrible tragedy of a world war sixty years ago, the countries thenceforth followed the course of peaceful cooperation.

Next was about the Demon King and the Demon Race. Ten years ago, at the northernmost end of the Randia continent, a space popularly known as the [Demon Realm] appeared, from there various kind of monsters large and small welled out, wreaking havoc upon many countries. The nations banded together and organized a punitive force to the Demon Realm, but it was annihilated. In the Demon Realm, there are [Demonic Creatures] with low (or possibly no) intelligence, and [Demon Race] with high intelligence and powerful combat ability, but the destruction of the punitive force was caused by the Demon Race. Also there are unconfirmed rumors of a King ruling over the Demon Race, the [Demon King].

After this war, the Demon Race did a counter-invasion, the Demon World that was at first only about the size of a small kingdom came to cover a fifth of the continent. Nowadays, this territory is called the [Demon King Territory]. The invasion has now stopped, but the reason

was because the number of the soldiers dispatched to each front expand the territory was dispersed, and the nations were somehow able to maintain the fronts. However, the nations did not have the manpower to invade into the Demon King Territory, and if the Demon Race side were to concentrate on one area the other areas would be invaded, so the stalemate between them continued.

Next is about this country. This country is the [Elfrieden Kingdom], a medium-small monarchy situated at the easternmost tip of the continent. It was from the start a country raised by various races working hand-in-hand, and even with a human king it accepts other races without discrimination. Any race can enjoy citizenship rights, suffrage, and practically all occupations other than [King] are open to any race. It even seems the prime minister advising the King is a half-elf human.

Because it doesn't border the Demon King Territory, it received little damage from Demonic Creature attacks, but it lacked national power from the beginning and its finance was not in good condition, either. In addition to the low food sufficiency, refugees who lost their homes to the expansion of the Demon King Territory flowing into this country only exacerbated the problem.

Also, dark clouds seem to be forming outside the borders. Relations with the [Grand Chaos] empire seems to be deteriorating. The Empire which boasts the largest domain outside the Demon King Territory was a country which shares the longest border with the Territory. It was also the nation to lead the first Demon King Territory invasion. In order to vindicate their honor, it seems they were planning a second invasion, and therefore imposed an unreasonable demand called the [War Support Appeal] on the nations. It was something of a neighborhood bully, saying "We're going to war so give us money and supplies. If you don't do as we say we're going to beat the hell out of your country."

Lastly, about the Hero Summoning that brought me into this world. The Empire as a matter of course sent the [War Support Appeal] to Elfrieden Kingdom as well. It seems the appeal contained the wording "If you can't pay the support money, you can use the Hero Summoning ritual handed

down in your country, summon the Hero, and send that Hero to the Empire.” It was obvious that this country does not have the spare funds to pay the support with, so it was clear that the Hero was their goal.

What was not clear was what their expectation was, did they want to use the Hero as a war asset, or maybe to dissect him for study and develop new weapons, or possibly they never expected anything to begin with and only wanted to use the failure to respond to the appeal as an excuse to annex the kingdom in one go. Faced with this situation the kingdom decided to at least perform the Hero Summoning Ritual. Whether they will deliver the Hero or not was still undecided, but if they successfully called the Hero he will become their negotiation card. Therefore, they had no choice but to show that they at least responded to the Appeal and performed the Ritual.

Also, nobody in the country ‘expected the Hero Summoning to be successful’.

BANG!

“Hiii! We are very sorry!”

I stomped my foot and the King jumped up in fear.

So what? Was I really called by chance, without anyone even expecting me to do anything.

This isn’t a problem you can settle with a ‘we didn’t think it would work, tehepero ☆’!

Goddammit, are you saying my Tranquil Life Plan is ruined over something dumb like that!?

“tch.... What are you going to do then?”

“W, what do you mean what?”

“Whether you’re sending me to the Empire or not, of course.”

It probably wasn’t the language I’m supposed to use towards an elder and a person in a higher social stratum, but please have some sympathy. It’s a situation that could decide my life and death so I obviously would

lose my temper. Not to mention because the Empire can decide the life and death of the Kingdom there's no meaning for me to abase myself.

"That is... We wonder what to do. We're stumped."

The King looked seriously troubled. This is a bit unexpected.

I totally expected him to cling to me in tears or prostrate himself saying "We're scared of the Empire! Please go to the Empire for the sake of our country!". This King looked timid, you see. Despite being the summoner, he doesn't look like he would shelter me against the Empire's wishes.

"Why are you so troubled? You're scared of the Empire right?"

"We're scared! We're scared so we're troubled!"

"With all due respect, I'll take care of the explanations from here."

The one who said that was the half-elf Prime Minister.

"Currently, the difference between our and the Empire's power is clear. We're completely incapable of defying the Empire. But (un)luckily, the Hero is our country's one and only card remaining. If we give this card away our country has nothing left to negotiate to the Empire with. In the end, they would snatch the Hero away and take down our country without hesitation."

"Well... that does happen."

Oushuu Fujiwarashi letting go of the card known as Minamoto Yoshitsune is a good precedent. People who yielded and gave away their wildcard over a temporary threat have no future. Ah, but I'm still not confident that I'm a wildcard. They say I'm a Hero or something, but I wonder if I woke up to some special power or another... I'll ask just in case.

"Actually, what is a 'Hero'? I don't recall being something like that."

"They say the Hero is 'one who shows the way to the changing of the era'."

So, not one who 'defeats the Demon King'....

“Isn’t that too obscure?”

“We are at a lack of data at any rate.”

“So you did the ceremony with that lack of data.”

“We are very ashamed.”

That paperwork-like excuse isn’t going to make me happy, you know.

Anyway, this is worrying. No matter what I’m going to do there’s too little information.

..... Therefore, what we need the most right now is time.

“..... King, I have a proposal.”

“What is it? Say anything you like.”

“I’d like to discuss what we’re going to do after this. Not standing out in the open like this, but carefully, sitting in chairs. Let’s see... the three of us, me, you, and that Prime Minister over there.”

“Hm. What do you think, Markus?”

“Very well, I guess.”

Asked by the king, the Prime Minister called Markus bowed his head.

“Therefore please gather materials regarding this country. Focus especially on materials relating to taxation, agriculture and fisheries, economics and industry, and intra-kingdom transportation. I would like materials regarding Heroes, too, but... well, let’s leave that off for now.”

“Understood. We shall gather them immediately.”

Then this occasion was broken up for now, and I was formally called to the King’s office. I sat on a soft sofa, facing the King and Prime Minister Markus in conference after conference. For the time being, we talked about every possible thing we could. It was mostly a meeting where I read the gathered materials and asked about every minute detail, and these two unexpectedly eagerly getting on board with the plan I presented.

Finally the meeting ended, the King’s exceedingly bright face as he left the room was even now becoming a hot topic among the guards. It was

the face of a man who had come to a resolution, they say.



Then the next day, the King who had gathered the castle's important personnel in the audience chamber, turned to them and loudly proclaimed.

"We, the 13th king of the Elfrieden Kingdom, Alberto Elfrieden, hereby declare that we abdicate the throne to the summoned hero Soma Kazuya! Also, we hereby announce the betrothal between our daughter Liecia Elfrieden and Soma-dono!"

The grounds fell silent. Every single person was at a loss for words.

The only ones who remained calm was probably only the Queen and Markus.

Meaning, it was a bombshell of a surprise announcement 'even to me.'



[Character Sketch: Alberto Elfrieden]

13th king of the Elfrieden Kingdom, reigning during the time of the appearance of the Demon Realm.

He was possessed of an exceedingly gentle personality and was loved by his subjects, but on the other hand, he lacked decisiveness, and had no notable achievements during his reign. However, because he did not make any notable mistakes either, he was an existence that would trouble later historians over whether he was a clever king or a foolish one.

Nevertheless, the fact that he recognized his own limits, and despite being only in his fifties abdicated the throne to the Hero who would later be the Elfrieden Empire's founding Emperor Soma E. Elfrieden, pushed the needle slightly towards the clever side of the gauge.

Chapter 1: Fundraising A

[Elfrieden Kingdom Capital Parnam]

It was the city where [Castle Parnam], where the Elfrieden Royalty dwells, is located. The castle town surrounding Castle Parnam flourished, the walls surrounding the city brings up the image of a medieval European city-state. The roofs on the buildings were a uniform orange, their appearance fitting well with the city's classic ambience.

There were main streets running east, west, south, and north with Castle Parnam at the center, each connecting to their respective gates, where carts and large beast mounts stream endlessly. Other than those there were countless small stone-paved streets running radial lines from the castle, and there were more streets connecting those streets together, looking like a spiderweb (or maybe a snowflake) when seen from the sky. On either side of those streets stood shopping districts and artisans' districts, perpetually bustling with people.

Today was a national holiday, furthermore a holiday celebrating the enthronement of a new king, so the shopping districts are even more busy than usual. Because of the sudden change in rulership the castle town was in a tense state for a short time, but once it was clear that the enthroned king was the summoned hero, that the old king handed over the throne out of his own will, and that the hero was to wed the king's daughter Princess Liecia so as the father-in-law the previous king won't be treated badly, the chaos resolved itself. It was because the former king 'was loved' during his rule to begin with.

[Well, if the king is all right then all's well I suppose]

[It must've been hard with the Empire's pressure and all. I'm glad he could get that load off his shoulders]

[Now he can probably relax. Good for him, huh]

It was generally interpreted favourably like so.... it seems the King's carefree attitude was a national trait. Soma, who had the throne pushed onto him against his will, expected at least one opposition movement to

rise against the sudden change, but he took it without a fight¹. In any case, the scenery in Parnam today was that of humans and therianthrope and dwarves coming and going in peace.

¹ «TN: Literally he took it like taking an underarm push»

That afternoon, a white horse ran on the stone pavements as if cutting through the peaceful atmosphere.

The one riding it was a beautiful girl in red and white military dress uniform right out of [Rose of Versailles], her platinum blonde hair tied in a ponytail, fluttering in the wind. Her age is about 16-17. Her transparent-seeming white skin and tightly-fitting military uniform accentuated her well-balanced figure.

Just the figure of the girl riding on the white horse would unmistakably make for a pretty picture. Seeing her, people along the way spontaneously let out sighs of admiration and raised cheers when they realized that she was the country's 'princess'.

"Princess! Congratulations on your engagement!"

"I wish you happiness!"

Without knowing her actual feelings, they gave her such warm cheers.

The sound of their cheers did not reach her ears in her current state, though.

"Father, Mother, please be safe.... I'm coming for you."

She, Liecia Elfrieden, muttered with a face of grief.



“Father! What is the meaning of this!”

The Royal Private Chambers. A large room so large a king size bed couldn't dominate it, each and every one of its furnishings were elegantly crafted. Normally, this room should have been the royal couple's bedroom and private room, and after the handing over of the throne it should've been given to Soma, but Soma who disliked the trouble involved in moving gave permission to the previous royal couple to continue using it so these two were still here. Incidentally, Soma still doesn't have his own room. The reason he gave was because I don't need one right now.

The sight the out of breath Liecia saw when she threw open the massive doors was the sight of her parents on the attached balcony

enjoying a refined afternoon teatime and holding a cream scone going “Here, say aaah—” “Aaaaaah—”. Liecia sat down hard for a moment, but immediately stood up and drew close to the previous king with an angry look in her eyes.

“I, ran all the way here from my regional patrols when I heard Father’s throne was usurped! So why are you going [Here, say Aaah—♪] so carefreely!”

As it happens, in addition to the title of Princess (fiancée to the current king after the abdication), she also graduated from a military academy and possesses an Officer title. Her social position itself isn’t that high, but due to her high birth she often gets orders to go around to each regional army for sympathy calls and the like. She was on one of those missions just now but upon hearing of her Father’s sudden abdication she came in a big hurry.

“We weren’t really usurped, we abdicated out of our own will”

“I don’t care about that! Why did you renounce the throne all of a sudden!”

“We talked with that man and believed he is necessary for this country. This is something we judged as one with the responsibility of looking after the country. We take no objections.”

The instant he made that declaration he seemed to show a little bit of the dignity of someone who carries a kingdom on his shoulders, so Liecia was reluctant to press the issue any further.

“Uuuh.... but, to even arbitrarily decide my marriage”

“You can talk it out between yourselves. The engagement was originally something our side insisted on him. If you don’t want to Soma-dono won’t force you to.”

“Motheeer”

Liecia looked to her mother for help, but the former Queen smiled and said.

“Go see Soma-dono first. This concerns your life after all, you should decide your future course by yourself. We will respect what you decide.”

So this is what they call not having an island to cling to. Liecia slumped her shoulders.



Liecia was walking through the castle at a quick pace.

She left this castle a few weeks ago to do her regional patrols. She was wondering how the castle was doing after she hadn't seen it for weeks, but everyone in the castle were running. The soldiers, the chamberlains, the bureaucrats, and even the ministers were all running. The sight of the round-bellied cabinet minister sweating from his forehead going “huff huff” as he ran was so surreal she stood there dumbfounded.

This has never happened before. The castle's atmosphere was supposed to be so relaxed you'd think that time flows more slowly here. The chamberlains and cabinet ministers would walk softly, and it should have been so quiet you can hear the voices of the soldiers practicing at the courtyard from anywhere in the castle. Didn't Liecia enter the military academy even though she was a princess because she was sick of that kind of atmosphere?

But look at it now. No matter where you go in the castle you can hear somebody's footsteps.

Liecia called one of the maids who was running in a flurry.

“Can I talk to you for a moment?”

“Ah, why if it isn't Princess. Do you have anything for me to do?”

“Ah, no... The castle's looking busy, did anything happen?”

“Um, no? Nothing in particular”

“Really? It feels somewhat busy to me though...”

“Yes. Ah, but it's probably the effect of the new king. Looking at the way he works it feels inexcusable to leave all the work to him. I as well feel that I shouldn't be so slow... ah, I'm in the middle of something right now

so please excuse me.”

“T, that so? Do your best”

Looking at the maid leaving in a quick pace, Liecia became dumbfounded. Just how is that new king working to even make a maid go that far! Just what kind of person became my fiancé. Liecia was at her wits' end.

The Royal Governmental Affairs Room. As Liecia opened the door the first thing she saw was a mountain of paper. The documents were piled up high in a heap, all but overflowing from a large desk that can seem to fit two grown men laying down. That was not all. Looking around there were several bureaucrats on other long tables fighting hard before similar bundles of paper.

As Liecia became dumbfounded, there was a young man's voice from behind the mountain of paper.

“Oi, the one who just came in”

“..... Ae!? What!?”

She let out a strange sound as she came to her senses, but the owner of the voice didn't seem to notice.

“You, can you read? Can you do arithmetic?”

“D, don't take me for a fool! I have received decent education!”

“Good then. Come here and help me work”

“Help you!? Who do you think you...”

“Don't worry about that, help me. This is a ‘Royal Order’.”

As he said that, the person behind the mountain of paper stood up and finally showed his face.

This was the first meeting between Soma and Liecia who had just been engaged the other day.

Liecia would later on recount her first impression of him being “a young man with tired eyes.”



In stories where a hero was summoned to another world there were lots of cases where the hero was given special powers upon being summoned. In most cases, it would be the power to face off alone against a thousand or a power that looked useless at first glance but is actually an incredible power that could conquer the world, the so-called “ME STRONK”²-kind of power.

² «TN: 俺TUEEEE»

I thought, so I suppose I should have gotten some power, and of course, I seem to have been given some powers. The first is [Multiple Concurrent Parallel Thought]. I can now think several thoughts simultaneously. While having a meeting about matter A, I can think about matter B in my

head. I feel like I can probably win a Shoutoku Taishi³ game against 10 people right now.

³ «TN: Prince Shoutoku (Shoutoku Taishi) can reportedly hold a conversation with 10 people simultaneously»

The other one is [Weak Telekinesis]. I can move things up to 300 grams in weight without touching, disregarding gravity. The lighter the object is, the more freely I can control it, also, together with Parallel Thought, I can move several things at a time. As a plus, it's quite amazing that I can see from an overlooking vantage point outside my normal point of view.

Then to talk about what I can do to completely exhibit these two powers, it's doing paperwork at three times the normal speed.

While looking over three documents simultaneously with parallel thought, I work two pens with weak telekinesis, and together with the one in my right hand I work three pens to sign each document. Yes, I'm making progress. In fact, if it weren't for these powers I'd be buried in a landslide of documents right about now.

..... Yeah, I know what you want to say. That's not a ME STRONK power at all. To put it in the words of a certain doujin's shooting style [it's a power only fit for paperwork]. Yeah, shabby. Even though it's useful right now, but when you think that the reason I was summoned was to fight the Demon King all you can say is "how did this happen!?" Even if it wasn't a magic strong enough to fight ten thousand enemies, at the very least I'd rather get something like a sword skill I can use to defend myself with.

To return to the main subject, as I was using those powers to combat the mountain of paper, the sturdy door was kicked in by a girl in military dress. She had a well featured face, transparent-white skin, flowing platinum blonde hair. She's a beautiful girl that were I to see her during peacetime I would undoubtedly become fascinated, but to me who had already stayed up three nights I can no longer see her as a beautiful girl but only as some "fresh labor". I half-forcibly sat her next to me and pushed two bundles of paper on her.

“Compare these two documents and when you see numbers that don’t match or different number of entries, put a checkmark on it.”

“Eh, what? What kind of job is this?”

“What you say...? We’re digging buried treasure”

I carelessly said, seeing the girl in uniform confused.

“Buried treasure?”

“More accurately, [Unaccounted-for Expenditures]. On one side is [Budgetary Requisitions] and the other is [Earnings and Expense Report]. Even if the demanded amount matches the expenses, if there are more expense entries than planned then they must be useless investment made up to use up the budget, or possibly embezzlement using investment as cover-up. We put a checkmark on those and if there’s any fraud we make the related place pay the loss. If we discover an individual embezzling money we’ll have them pay it back, and if they can’t pay it back we arrest them and seize their property.”

“A, all right”

Perhaps feeling threatened by the attitude of a person who had just done an all-nighter, she did as I told her. Just like that, after about two hours passing with her working silently next to me, the girl in military dress suddenly talked to me without stopping her hands check marking the documents.

“Hey”

“..... What is it? If you’re tired then you can have a rest if you want”

“Not that..... I haven’t told you my name yet. I’m Liecia Elfrieden, daughter of the previous king Alberto Elfrieden”

The moment the girl said that, the three pens I was manipulating stopped.

I stared wide-eyed at the girl who called herself Liecia.

“..... So you’re the princess”

“I don’t look it?”

“Well, you’re wearing military uniform. But.... yeah, you kinda look like one”

Now that you mention it, she has class, making me aware of her high-spec looks.

“I’m ... Souma Kazuya. I’m acting as the current king for now”

Liecia turned her face towards me. We’re looking really close into each others’ eyes. Unlike me who was just taken aback, her golden pupils seems like she’s evaluating me. After staring for a while Liecia finally opened her mouth.

“I’m not a princess anymore. Since you usurped the throne my position is a bit delicate”

“Usurped...? I only had the throne being thrown wholesale at me by your father, you know! Even though I only wanted to live a tranquil life... Why did I have to carry this heavy burden”

“..... Just what happened? I know you’re the summoned hero, but why did it suddenly turn into handing over the throne”

“I’d like to know that, too. All I wanted was to keep myself safe...”

When I was summoned into this world I was on the brink of being sent to the Empire. The King didn’t seem too eager to do so but he had no other special plans, if the Empire made another forced appeal he can do nothing but send me over. Then if I was sent to the Empire in the end, no matter which way my fate turns there’s no bright future in sight. In order to protect myself, I needed to make them choose to not send the hero over.

The plan I presented to the king was to buy time by “paying the support money”, and using that time to press a “rich country, strong army policy”. Since they said “if you can’t pay then just send the hero over”, we can pay and get it over with. They would then lose any pretense with which to interfere. It was an attempt at intimidation but since it wasn’t a real intimidation, I judged that the Empire would care about their honor and

not press any further than that. With the time we gained by that, we would advance the 'rich country strong army policy' and build a country that won't yield even if the Empire threatens us again.

Of course, those two had objections. "This country doesn't have the funds to pay the support money with," they said. However, with the materials I examined, I showed them that payment is possible by selling off some government facilities, suppressing government spending, and handing over 'the king's private property' to some extent. I attended an undergraduate program in socio-economics and dreamed of becoming a government employee. This much is within my field of expertise.

The King looked worried seeing the plan, but Prime Minister Markus seemed eager. He seemed to have judged that rather than sending the hero away to maintain the status quo, it was better for the country's future to reform the economy. I was relieved at Prime Minister's eagerness. As the person who suggested it I was probably expected to do some work, probably as a finance officer, helping with the reform... or so I thought.

"But then they made me King"

"Ah, um... sorry I guess"

"You have nothing to apologize for. Actually, you're a victim here, being suddenly told you have a fiancé"

"Yeah, that's true... wait, huh? I wonder which of us has the higher position. Was it bad that I haven't been using polite language?"

On the one hand we have a former commoner, current King. On the other we have a former princess, current Queen candidate.

"..... I guess you can just talk casually"

"..... Right"

"Also, don't worry about the engagement. I'm only looking after the throne right now. I'll probably quit being King in a few years"

"Eh, why!?"

“I didn’t intend to do more work than earning [support money] so I don’t get sent to the Empire to begin with. Now that the throne has been handed to me, I’ll at least put the country’s economy on track, but I’ll let the people choose what comes next. Of course, I’m okay with cancelling the engagement”



Liecia stared wide-eyed at Soma who uttered such words.

(No no, he easily said so but does he understand how hard it is to do)

Even the military-obsessed Liecia who is unfamiliar with government affairs understands this country’s situation. It was on the brink of a [checkmate]. It was low in food sufficiency to begin with, the recession, the influx of refugees from the Demon King invasion, then the pressure from the Grand Chaos Empire.... all are causes for concern to deal with. In all likelihood, even if the previous King’s reign continued it’ll only last several more years. As might be expected from a military academy graduate, Liecia can see these things with a calm eye.

Therefore she somewhat understands the actions of her father who surrenders the throne to someone he sees as superior right on the spot. But then, could he even do this putting this country’s economy on track thing? If let’s say he could, then are the people going to let the King that accomplished such feats retire just like that.

“.... So, you think you can secure the support money?”

“Hm? Ah, I’ve already secured the support money for the Empire”

“..... Eh?”

“I’m now raising funds for the reform. Frankly, it takes more money than paying the Empire”

No.... wait hold on right there! Already secured he says? the money the Empire asked was supposedly as big as a third of the country’s annual budget. It rivaled a smaller country’s total annual budget and he says he’s already got it ready?

“Where did you find that kind of...”

“I’ve sold about a third of the treasure in the treasure chamber”

“Treasure chamber...? The National Treasures!?”

He actually sold the National Treasures!? What is he thinking!

I questioned Soma who nonchalantly did something so outrageous as that.

“The National Treasures belong to the whole country you know! Selling that out on your own accord is treason to the people!”

“N, now, calm down. Since you say it belongs to the country then wouldn’t it be acceptable to sell it for the sake of the entire nation’s well being?”

“Yes, but.... There are things there with cultural and historic significance”

“Ah— I’ve excluded those things. The things I’ve sold are the hard assets like gems and ornaments”

Soma tracked down and presented a catalogue put together regarding the National Treasures from the stack of documents.

“I divided the National Treasures into [Group A: things with cultural value], [Group B: things without cultural value but has property value], and [Group C: others], and sold only Group B. Rather than selling group A it would be better to put them on display in galleries or museums at regular intervals for long term acquisition of foreign currency”

“That might be true, but... group C?”

“Magic items, magic books and stuff. I actually don’t know how to treat them. They’re something like weapons, so to speak. I can’t just sell them away or put them on display. Though the [set of hero’s equipment] looked like it’s going to sell for quite a lot”

“Please stop that...”

You’re still a hero, even for a moment... Ah, but you’re a King now.

“But, if we had that kind of money shouldn’t we have put it to arming ourselves to prepare against the Empire? I was taught to [better gamble 1000 yen in national defense than give one tenth of a rin⁴ in tribute] in the academy”

“I see your proverb and raise you a short proverb. [Time is money]. The effect is by offering war support money as sacrifice I can earn this country some much-needed ‘Time’.”

“What’s with your phrasing?”

“Don’t worry about it. Anyway, even if we increase our armaments there’s no meaning if we don’t solve our domestic problems. As long as the food and refugee problems aren’t solved, we’re going to keep losing popular support. If that happens we’ll be a country so brittle the Empire only needs to fan the flames a little before an insurrection happens”

“No way... The people should recognize what a threat the Empire is”

“That’s an idealistic view. [The poor can’t afford manners]. After all there can’t be morals nor patriotism on an empty stomach. Without any wriggle room for themselves they can’t worry about others”

⁴ «TN: 1 rin = 1/1000 yen»

The look in Soma’s eyes was awfully cold as he said that.

That was a terribly realistic view. I think it seems right on point.

It’s just that... I don’t know.

“Well now, should we get back to work?”

“...”

I felt as if my chest tightened from his gaze.



We continued for another day and was finally able to secure a certain amount of money. Though it won’t bring us to prosperity it can act as funds for pressing reforms. Being able to raise this much funds from just the directly controlled territories without touching the ‘Three Duchies’, I

think it's worth praising.

Looking around inside the room there were dead bodies strewn about. Among the bureaucrats there are those who were sleeping face down on the desks, and there are also those who sleep laying back on their chairs, looking up at the ceiling. As for myself, I have already stayed up four nights, but by splitting my consciousness into three using parallel thought I can let them take turns sleeping one at a time so I don't feel tired mentally (though since it's physically exhausting I don't want to use it frequently)

Meanwhile, on the Government Affairs Room sofa, Liecia was lying down sleeping. I quietly drew near and sat on the sofa's armrest, gazing at the sleeping Liecia. In the end she helped me work until almost dawn. She must have lots of things to say after suddenly getting a fiancé, but I have to thank her for cooperating with my work despite all that.

I brushed the sleeping Liecia's head. Her silky hair glided between my fingers.

The feeling of elation from being released from a long stretch of work probably had something to do with this. It's quite an embarrassing act to do sober.

"Mu—..."

Liecia groaned and I let my hand off her hair. The next moment, Liecia opened her eyes and suddenly sat upright. She was still sleepy, looking blankly all over the place. I smiled as I called her out.

"Morning Liecia"

"Ah, morning... huh? I slept..."

"The work's over. You want to sleep a little more?"

"Ah, no. I'm good. Rather, how about you Soma? You haven't slept at all right?"

It seems like she's already fully awake, and I'm honestly happy that she worries about me.

I got up from the armrest and made an exaggerated stretch.

“I’m planning to rest easy after this, but... oh, right. Will you come with me for a moment?”

“Hm? Where?”

“A walk before bed”

Chapter 1: Fundraising B

Right after dawn, the two of us, Liecia and I, were being jolted on horseback.

While breathing the still early morning misty air, Liecia's favorite horse Celine, unmindful of the two person's worth of weight on it, jumped as it ran. We were riding double like on a motorbike, but it was Liecia who was holding the reins while the one with arms gripping tightly around her slender waist behind her was me.

"Whoa there, don't press my stomach so strongly"

"No, well, this is quite scary you know?"

"Pathetic. Isn't it normally the man who's supposed to be holding the reins"

"Can't be helped. This is the first time riding a horse for me"

A modern Japanese, Tokyo born, Tokyo raised, doesn't have many chances to ride a horse anyway.

At most, it was only to the extent of riding a pony with a helper at a petting zoo when I was a child.

"Any adult in this country, from farmers to nobles, can ride horses you know?"

"Unfortunately, the country I came from has lots of more convenient modes of transport"

"But this country mainly uses horses. Since you're here anyway why don't you get used to it?"

"..... when I have time"

"Right. so, the vehicles in your country, I think I'm interested"

"Yeah, there box-shaped vehicles with wheels that can carry a huge number of people in one go..."

While having that conversation, we continued galloping along.

It's probably around 6 right now. About time for people to finally start working. The shopping districts have no stores open, and there are virtually no pedestrians.

Leaving the urban area, we finally arrived at the walls surrounding the city. We talked with the guard there and went outside through a small gate next to a large gate (opens 7 AM) that you don't see outside of foreign fantasy movies.

The negotiations this time was handled by Liecia. A newly enthroned King would probably not be allowed outside the gates without guards. Which is why the military officer Liecia went and dodged the issue saying "I'm going outside on royal orders" or something. After we safely left the castle gates, Liecia grumbled.

"They wrote it down as a royal order. Now how should I explain to my superiors..."

I politely ignored her.

Then within a short time, we finally arrived at our destination.

"..... stop here"

I asked Liecia to stop the horse, and she looked at me with a doubtful face.

"You wanted to come here? I can't see anything but fields, though"

As Liecia said, wherever we look around us there's nothing but verdant fields.

Green fields wet with dew as far as the eye can see. This place.... there's no mistaking it.

"I want Liecia to see this sight"

"These fields? Well, it certainly is pretty, wet with morning dew and all that..."

"Pretty.... huh. Even though it's all because of this that people are dying from starvation"

“Wha?”

Liecia widened her eyes in surprise. I made a mocking smile.

“Look closely. These inedible fields are the cause of this country’s food problems”



Inedible fields.

That is what Soma called the fields spreading before our eyes, making a mocking smile.

“.... what does that mean?”

“It means what it says. What we have spreading out here are all [cotton]”

“Cotton.... Ah! That’s what you meant by inedible”

Cotton is the raw materials for making cotton thread. Certainly not for eating.

Soma sat down on the spot and propped his elbows on his knees.

“In conclusion, the country’s food problems were caused by the increase of these cotton fields.”

“.... huh?”

Did he just casually say something amazing just now? The country’s food problems?

Not noticing my bewilderment, Soma continued talking.

“I found this out when I was sorting out the documents, but because of the enlargement of the Demon King Territory demand for necessities like clothes increased. Naturally, the demand for the raw material, cotton, also increased. As the price of cotton rises, you can only sell what you make, so the farmers stopped the food cultivation they’ve been doing and simultaneously switched to cotton. They’re [cash crops] not meant to be eaten but to be sold, but the fact the farmers suddenly switched to farming only cash crops is causing this country’s food sufficiency to

decline”

“....”

I didn't know that. No, I've never given it any thought.

Wondering what's causing our country's food problems, I selfishly thought it may be bad weather, or maybe because the land is bad to begin with. Even though there's such a definite cause, even though I've lived here for over ten years, I didn't notice at all. Even though Soma who was only called out here a few days ago was able to notice.

“To expand on that, the cause of the country's recession is the same. Because our food sufficiency is low we have no choice but to import from other countries, but because there are transportation costs for importation, the price of foodstuffs suddenly jumped. Though a family's finances would be under pressure, they can only cut down food expenses so much. If they don't eat, they die, after all, so of course what gets cut down are luxury groceries and luxury items. This restrained buying is what's causing the recession”

What was I looking at. If I were a townspeople I'd just say you reap what you sow and that's that.

But I was a princess. A superior's ignorance is the murder of those below her.

“I'm... disqualified as royalty”

Because of the extreme exhaustion I sat down hard on the spot.

I've never in my life felt a sense of helplessness I'm feeling today. Seeing me like that, Soma groaned “ah” and “uh” and then plopped his hand on my head.

“Don't be so discouraged. We can still make it in time. I've secured the funds. With this money let's first reform the agriculture”

“..... What are you going to do?”

“Restricting farming of cash crops, replanting food fields, raising food sufficiency. The country will support the conversion with subsidies. First

we plant soybeans that has a wide range of use and potatoes that are resistant to crop failure, and finally add paddy fields. Then...”

Soma talked about his wide-ranging agriculture reforms. There were lots of words I don’t understand, like rice or paddy, but his face looked radiant. I think I understand why father turned over the throne. He’s the one this country needs the most right now. No matter what it takes we need to tie him down to this country.

..... The engagement with me was probably one of those ties.

(... this is definitely not the time to say it isn’t funny having my marriage arbitrarily decided) Soma said he’d surrender the throne once he put the country’s economy on track, but there’s no way I can accept that. To let a rare talent leave government service is the country’s failure. I need to make sure that doesn’t happen no matter what.

(I wonder if I can construct a fait accompli and make him take responsibility.... wait! F, fait accompli... means... that, right...?) Because of the ‘image’ that came to mind, my face suddenly turned red.

“Which is why the mountain areas... hey Liecia, are you listening?”

“Hyes! I, I’m listening”

“? Somehow you look red?”

“It’s the morning sun! Don’t worry, keep talking!”

“???”

My cheeks were hot. I think I’ll die from embarrassment.

What Soma said after that didn’t enter my ears at all.



[Character Sketch: Liecia Elfrieden]

Daughter of the 13th King of Elfrieden, Alberto Elfrieden. She married the one who would later become Soma E Elfrieden. While being a princess, she was also a graduate from a military academy and a personnel of the royal military, and in that capacity, actively took her part

as the bridge between Soma and the Military. She also showed more resourcefulness regarding government affairs than her father, to the point that it was later speculated that she might not be blood related to him. She would always be with Soma through his turbulent life¹, supporting him from the side, being the very model of a Good Wife and Wise Mother.

¹«TN: heh»

*

The cause of the food shortage was the sudden conversion from food crops to cash crops. A well-known example of this is the “forced planting system²” introduced in the Netherlands East Indies. I heard that because the colony was forced into planting cash crops, famine broke out and many died from starvation.

² «TN: Cultuurstelsel»

Chapter 2: First Let's Begin from ×× A

This world's technology organisation is a big mess.

For instance, on Earth science and technology progresses with the steps “manpower → watermill/windmill → steam engine → internal combustion engine”. When you think “I want to fly free in the sky♪”, you have to understand the principle of dynamic lift and build a propulsion system to make an airplane, and you have to understand the theory why you need to burn things to make the propulsion system work. On Earth, new technology is always built on top of lower technologies.

However, this world has magic and magical beasts.

If you say “I want to fly free in the sky”, you get “here you go! Wyvern!”¹. Completely ignoring gunpowder and internal combustion engines, the people of this country fly in the sky. If they're so inclined, they could even make fire or water or lightning appear with magic, and there's a large gap between what they could and could not do.

¹ «TN: Referring to the opening song of the anime Doraemon, which goes: I want to fly free in the sky / Here you go! Bamboocopter!»

They have things similar to trucks, but without internal combustion engines, they're pulled by large magical beasts.

They have steel battleships, but they're pulled by huge sea dragons.

They don't have electricity, but the country's nights are bright. The country's street lights are filled with luminous moss that store light during the day and illuminate the cities at night.

They don't have gas, and they cook with firewood, hearths, and fire-attribute magic (or magic tools).

They don't have water pipes, but water wells are installed throughout the cities, endowed with water-attribute magic circles to draw water from underground.

..... that's how it goes.

There are lots of things this country does with the power of magic, even without science.

On the other hand, if you leave out the magic and magic beasts, the country have a low culture level. Speaking in terms of our world's history, they're probably at the eve of the early modern times and the deathbed of the middle ages. Feudal systems still remain, and the Industrial Revolution is still far away. Which is why there must be something that I, who came from a future five centuries after the Industrial Revolution, know that can be turned into money.

That was what I was thinking.



“We’re going with the agricultural reforms but it can’t be done in a day. Which is why for the meantime I decided to increase import volume from abroad to deal with the food problem”

Soma, sitting opposite of me around a long, narrow table, said so and sank his teeth into his toast. On the table there was a basket of toast and scrambled eggs and chorizo² and salad on plates for two lined up. It’s breakfast time now.

²«TN: pork sausage»

“But you said since imports have transport costs they cause restrained buying”

“Yup. So for the time being the country buys them and sells them at the local price. There will be tariff deficits but since it’s urgent we’ll have to get over it. I’d like to earn through exports to make up for it but we have to find something to replace the biggest earner, cotton wool”

“Quite a jam, huh... Well, that aside...”

I mentioned the one thing I had been wanting to comment on since a while ago.

“Why the hell is the king having breakfast at this kind of place!?”

This is the castle mess hall. Moreover, it’s the common mess hall the

live-in soldiers and chamberlains use, also, what Soma and I are eating right now is the Morning Set A. The king of a country is blending in with soldiers and eating soldier food. There should be a limit to being undignified.

“The soldiers’ and chamberlains’ curious gazes are painful...”

“Don’t mind them. I’m putting up cutbacks on the castle. We can’t waste money on food”

“Don’t you think scrimping is bad for the economy?”

“That’s if you hoard what you scrimp. If you use the saved money properly the economy will turn”

“But anyhow, you don’t have to eat out here”

“So you want to eat this breakfast at that gargantuan table? It feels empty there, no?”

“Well, you might be right, but...”

But I still have a problem with eating here where everyone can see.

Even if I’ve gotten used to it at the academy, for now Soma is my fiancé so this situation feels like we’re having a rendezvous in public.

How am I supposed to stay calm?

“Haah..... but if you’re cutting down on food expenses then you should tell father and mother. Those two were having a nice teatime with cake”

“Ah—, they’re fine. They’re all [gifts] from the townspeople”

“Gifts?”

So our people can afford something like that.

“Well, they’re from large store owners and shops owned by influential lords. The label of [Royal Purveyor] carries prestige in this country. They send them over quite frequently”

“Don’t say this country! You’re its king now!”

“As foods they’re sweet but they don’t store well. I don’t like sweets that

much but food is food, so I gave them to the previous royal couple and the maids and had them write down their impressions and the highly rated ones get the label [Royal Purveyor]. They're unexpectedly popular"

"So that's why..."

Recently the maids have been fussing about "something's wrong with the weight war front".

There are also reports that maids have been joining the soldiers' practice. We know why but we can't stop, their womanly souls scream, probably. I have to be careful, too.

While I swore that in my heart, Soma showed a somewhat distant look.

"W, what's wrong?"

"No, well... If our food expenses get any more dangerous it's possible we're going to have to eat the gift cakes for our three meals.... Hahaha... [if they don't have bread then let them eat cake], I suppose"

"Without understanding the actual situations, the people are going to revolt..."

"Well well, the two of you look like you're having fun"

The two of us turned our heads and we saw a young man wearing Royal Knight fluted armor (sans helmet) standing there. He was tall and had a rather solid build, together with his straight blonde hair they form a sweet mask that women would love.

"I say, if it isn't Ludwin-dono"

"Long time no see, princess. No, perhaps I should rather say Queen now"

"Ah, um.... Right now I'm neither though"

Looking at our exchange, Soma made a face that says "who?", so I formally introduced him.

Ludwin Arks.

Despite his age of not even 30 years, he distinguished himself enough to

be entrusted with the leadership of the Elfrieden Royal Knights. The Captain of the Royal Knights is an important position that is in charge of the capital Parnam and Parnam Castle's defense during peacetime but in emergencies, they are also entrusted to lead the armed force under direct control of the King, the [Royal Guard].

Incidentally, the [Three Dukes] are the three ducal houses in charge of this country's Army, Navy, and Air Force.

The current Three Dukes are as follows.

General of the Elfrieden Royal Army, Duke Georg Carmine.

A lion-maned therianthrope. With command like raging fire, he strikes fear to his enemies.

Admiral of the Elfrieden Royal Navy, Duchess Ecksel Walter.

A mizuchi³ with pirates in her ancestry. A valiant lady who is adept at both naval warfare and politics.

³ «TN: Sea Dragon»

Marshal of the Elfrieden Royal Air Force, Duke Castor Vargas.

A Dragonewt (half-dragon half-human). The star of the Royal Armed Forces, a Dragon Knight who rules the skies.

Each of them, in exchange for their families' oath of fealty to the kingdom, are given territory (duchies) in the kingdom and are allowed autonomy. In the days following the kingdom's founding, this system was instituted in order to reduce friction the races in this country that was built of different races gathered together, but even now when all the races lived peacefully together the system remains. In exchange for territory they stake their entire families' lives to protect their beloved country.

However, the current Three Dukes stayed their armies and remained in each of their territories. The Three Dukes who respected the previous king, i.e. Father, still haven't recognized Soma, who looked to them as if having stolen the throne, as their Lord. This has become quite an annoyance for Soma. The Three Dukes' territories taken together make

one third of the country, and without their cooperation the reforms Soma is pursuing would prove difficult.

I also wrote letters again and again to Duke Carmine, my direct superior who cared for me like his own daughter, to meet and speak with Soma, but he only replied with the single line, “I still can’t trust him”. That man is flexible with tactics but has a hard head. I’m sure he’s waiting for Soma to go see him and bow his head asking for his cooperation. He wants things done properly like that. Duchess Walter and Duke Vargas are probably the same.

But that was probably too naïve.

Soma is losing his patience over the slowly proceeding reforms.

If the Three Dukes would turn their backs on him, he would think of turning his back on them.

Soma has the resolve to do just that. My stomach hurts thinking about it.

Without knowing what I was thinking, Soma shook hands with Ludwin.

“I’m Souma Kazuya. For now I’m the king”

“Well well, Hero-King. I’m the Captain of the Royal Knights Ludwin Arks. Your working ways have become quite a rumor among the officials”

“Then when you see them gossiping again, tell them to [get to work]”

“Hahaha, understood. Ah, may I have breakfast with you?”

“I don’t really mind. Also you can do without honorifics outside formal occasions”

“All right”

Ludwin-dono took the tray with his breakfast and sat beside me.

“So, about your reforms. How’s it going?”

“Not well... Especially the problem of talented personnel”

Soma grumbled as he bit into his toast.

“I’m only taking over the previous King’s advisors right now. Which is to say, the people that allowed the country to fall this far. Everyone else besides Prime Minister Markus are useless”

This country is the absolute monarchy of the king. Its government strongly reflects the king’s will.

There is a national assembly where the citizens have the right to vote, but it was a place where they decide on bills and laws to suggest to the king, and whatever bills and policies decided there was proposed to the king through the prime minister’s mouth. Whether or not it will be adopted all depends on the king. Then again, while that may be true, if the king acted as without concern for the people, he will lose their hearts and be taken down by the hands of the Three Dukes holding the military.

Then, should the king wish to test out a political measure, he could call together independent councillors other than the prime minister. They are something like a [cabinet] in democratic states. The king would open a conference with his councillors and judge whether a political measure is useful or not. The choice of personnel is entirely the king’s prerogative. He could call up whoever and however many people. Of course if too many incompetent personnel gets appointed it will lead to endless arguments and he will lose the faith of the people.

Normally, before one ascends to the throne (in this country that would be as a prince), one should have assembled the people who will become councillors, but Soma who was so suddenly enthroned never did such a thing.

“Even Markus is already past his prime. I want the kind of retainer that will inspect what I want inspected and wrangle what I want wrangled”

“I know, right. It’s the fate of superiors to want excellent subordinates”

“You do too?”

“Yeah. Most military academy graduates wish to join the Three Ducal Armies. The Royal Guard is the capital city’s guards, after all. It’s not too popular, right, princess”

“Well.... that’s true. My classmates mostly went to the Three Ducal Armies as well”

I’m also a member of the army, but being Royalty, it can’t be helped that I joined the Royal Guard in charge of protecting royalty.

“So as it happens, the current Royal Guard is full of people who are left over or failed. There are even stray mad scientists from the weapons development division among them”

“Ooh, I’d like to meet them”

Seeing Soma interested, Ludwin smiled bitterly and said, “I’ll introduce you next time”.

We had idle chatter for a while, then we parted with Ludwin-dono. When I get to the room I’ll try sending another letter to Duke Carmine, I thought.



Sure enough, personnel assembly is an urgent business.

It might have been because I abused my ability but my skill level increased and I was able to do one more person’s worth of work (essentially, four people’s worth of work) but that was in the end only one more me. I don’t know what I don’t know, and I don’t have the abilities I don’t have.⁴

What I need is people who know what I don’t know, and can do what I can’t.

I’d kill for talented personnel like that.

⁴ «TN: It does get confusing when “I” is plural...»

Which is why I decided to assemble personnel.

“I’m thinking of using the Royal Voice Broadcast”

“Well, I do think that’ll make things quick...”

The Royal Voice Broadcast is equipment for sending out the King’s voice throughout the country.

An orb two meters in diameter floats in the middle of a room inside the castle called the [Royal Voice Chamber]. This orb is an item loaded with the magic of wind spirits, sylphs, and water spirits, undines, sending out the king's voice throughout the land. In towns where the receiving environment has been set up, it can even show his image.

Liecia didn't object to using it but she was tilting her head in doubt.

"But then again it's the first time anyone's ever assembled personnel using the Royal Voice Broadcast"

"How do you normally do it?"

"Getting people using private connections, or using people who passed written tests"

"Isn't that a bit biased? How good is literacy in this country?"

"Half the people can read. 3 out of 10 can write"

"Isn't it useless then? Only 3 out of 10 people can take the test"

"That's the average for the whole world, though..."

So this is what happens without compulsory education.

I should take care of this quickly as well....

"Anyone can read and write if they take lessons. You think I'm going to gather personnel judging on whether or not they have money for lessons? Seventy percent of the population! How many diamonds in the rough is this country going to let lie"

"..... I have no answer to that"

Liecia said, feeling ashamed. Well there's no use telling just her.

This country definitely needs changing on a fundamental level.

"So? What conditions are you going to use?"

"I've already thought up what I'm going to say. Actually, I'm going to borrow the words of a hero I respect"

"Hero?"

“Yeah, the unscrupulous hero of chaotic times⁵”

⁵ «TN: Cao Cao»



[If you have talent I have use for you!]

In the capital, in the cities, in the towns, in the villages, Soma's voice resounded, carried by the magic of the sylphs.

Also, in the capital, the cities, and large towns, Soma's image is projected. This is thanks to the undine magic loaded onto the [Royal Voice Broadcast]. Fog is sprinkled to the air using equipment installed at each city and there the scene of the [Royal Voice Chamber] is reproduced using refraction. In modern terms, image data from the actual recording location is received and projected to a screen in the sky in real time, or something like that.

The image is rough but the people stirred seeing the new king for the first time.

Some people were at a loss seeing his youth, and some at his common appearance. Although it was also Soma's fault for forgoing ceremonial dress, saying it's a nuisance, and only wore a crown.

Only the sight of Liecia standing firm beside him gave them peace of mind.

They had heard that the former king wasn't forcibly usurped, but they were still ill at ease until they saw him with their own eyes. Liecia's gallant beauty is especially popular with the people.

Meanwhile, Soma continued his speech.

[Countrymen, this nation is on the verge of an unprecedented crisis! Serious food problems, the impending economic recession, the influx of refugees whose lands were stolen by the Demon King.... these are all grave illnesses that plague this country! And that is not all! The largest nation on the continent, the Grand Chaos Empire is increasing their influence, levying war support money on the countries, putting pressure

on their economies. And not only the Empire, powerful countries are taking this chance to swallow up lesser countries, for a powerless country to survive they must sharpen their fangs]

[The previous king saw that his own power wasn't up to the task and entrusted my humble self with the country's affairs. To recognise what he could not do and entrust them to those who can, is he not a capable man to be able to understand this? The previous king is truly worthy to be called a wise ruler in times of peace]

Liecia momentarily gave him a cold look that says "you don't really mean it, do you...?", but not a single person noticed.

[But this is a time of upheaval, and times of upheaval takes not a saintly king, but a king smelling of mud, a tenacious survivor! Not a lord who's better than average at everything, but one who won't give up surviving, one who stands above all on this one point, because your families' safety and your fortunes' protection depends on his results! That is why the previous king entrusted this country to me! Tenacity. On this one point alone I far surpass the previous king!]

[Right now, I have many reforms under way! But for that there is an overwhelming lack of talented people! So therefore, right now, I am recruiting talented people!]

[I will say it once again! Countrymen, if you have talent I have use for you! This time of chaos needs not people who are better on average than others, but people who tower over the rest on a single point alone. I will not call what the talent is into question. Neither will I call anything else other than that talent into question. If you have the pride that "I will not lose to anyone on this", then stand before me!]

[Your education, your age, your social status, your origins, your race, nor your gender matters! Not whether you can read or write, not whether you can do arithmetics, not the size of your assets, not whether or not you are in sound health, not the beauty or ugliness of your face or figure, nor whether you have a scar on your shin, none of it matters! On this one thing alone I far surpass others, on this one thing alone I won't lose to

anyone in the country. If any of you think so then show yourselves before me! Should I deem you useful for the country I shall shower you with gratitude and welcome you into my court!]

The new king's fervent speech made the people's eyes shine.

While listening to his fervent speech everyone is racking their brains over whether they have a talent that exceeds others. However, at the same time, they thought even if I can find something I can do better than other people, if it serves no purpose then it won't be of use. That feeling, almost a resignedness, was the final breakwater to the excitement brought about by the fervent speech.

The King said he wanted people who can settle the country's problems.

They didn't think the talent they had could be of use to the kingdom.

[I'm sure some of you are hesitant over whether or not your talent will be of use!]

As if understanding the people's hesitation, Soma said.

[But that is not for you to decide! Whether your talent is something the country needs or not is my, Soma Kazuya's, decision to make! Even if your talent is something people call worthless, it doesn't matter! I will pass judgement! So don't hesitate! Come before me and show me what you've got!]

Then as if calming down, Soma took a breath.

[If you still have your hesitations, let's do this. If that talent of yours proves to be unequaled in the kingdom, I will publish a "Mark of Peerlessness" under the name of the King of Elfrieden and you will receive a cash gift. ... Are you excited now, people!]

Soma's projected image made a fist pump.

That moment, cheers welled up from each and every town in the country.

It was the moment the breakwater in the people's hearts burst.

The capital was no different.

[Oooh... I can hear the shouts from the castle town from here. Your enthusiasm is splendid]

Soma's tone broke, and Liecia next to him was troubled but nobody noticed.

[Also, I don't mind if you put yourself or other people forward. If you recommend other people the recommender will get three tenths of the rewards. Drag out the people who'd act recluse in this time of the country's crisis. Also, for contested talents like "swordsmanship" or "singing", I will have you compete with others beforehand and select a representative so be ready for that. All right... now I have said what I wanted to say.]

Then Soma, in the Royal Voice Broadcast ended with these words.

[Then to all of you talented people, I'll be in the capital Parnam to shake hands with you]



"What's with that last line?"

After the broadcast ended, Liecia glared at me to which I smiled and said, "Just going with the flow."

Well now, how are the people going to react. Will the personnel I wanted come.

"It'll be great if lots of people come"

"..... right"

Chapter 2: First Let's Begin from ×× B

«TN: footnotes are the author's own parenthesized statements that took more than half a line (and thus would break the flow of text) unless I specifically marked them with a «TN: » block.»

*

In history there are scenes that would easily be turned into plays in later eras. The requirements for those are One, it has to be the turning point of an age.

Two, there has to be a star appropriate for a play.

These are the two requirements.

In the case of the Sengoku Period, it's the scene of Oda Nobunaga dancing the [Atsumori] before the battle of Okehazama.

In the case of the Annals of the Three Kingdoms, it's the scene of Liu Bei's [Three Visits] to Zhuge Liang.

In the case of Rome, it's the scene of Caesar's [Alea Jacta Est] as he crossed the Rubicon.

In that case, if one were to ask which scene in this age where Soma was enthroned would most often be turned into plays, it would certainly be the scene of this personnel gathering. Of the five talented youngsters that stood before Soma at his summons, only one did he unconditionally receive.

From Soma's point of view, this scene was just another one of his exploits, but from a certain person's point of view, it was a Cinderella story that turned their life upside down, and from the point of view of 'one of the remaining four youngsters who saw the scene differently than the other three', it was [the turning point of an age].

Yes. This scene has 'three' leading actors.



I was worried how many people would come, but it was unexpectedly a

huge success.

I'm glad I didn't limit the kind of talent and also gave out cash rewards.

The capital right now is so jammed with people they had to instate an entry limitation. Due to the exceptional circumstances, the civil officials starting with Markus had been in a tizzy since morning.

It was surprising that this country has this many talented people, but somehow it doesn't seem to be the case. Because of my grand recruitment, spectators who wanted to have a look at what kind of people catches the King's eye came along in large numbers, and where there's people, there's money. Merchants, seeing this good opportunity, also gathered and had begun setting up street stalls, and the castle town turned into something like a festival. The curious situation was stimulating to the economy but as it does, the civil officials' troubles went on the increase.

Now then, the main part, the personnel gathering, seems to be a great success.

From action-ready talents to ones that doesn't look to be useful at first glance, a lot of talents displayed themselves on the judging grounds. Five officials at the judging grounds judged whether or not the talent being displayed is unique or not, and if their talent was acknowledged they will get a cash reward no matter the talent. Liecia and I monitored the whole thing from a separate room and should a person catch our interest they will be picked out.

A truly great number of people announced their candidacy but on the other hand the amount of 'duplicates' are proportionally high. [Valor], [Public Entertainment], and [Beauty] talents were particularly violently contested so they were conducted in separate venues to decide the [Number One] from each of them. The venues were respectively designated the [Kingdom's Number One Fighting Tournament], [Kingdom of Talents], and [Elfrieden Bishoujo Grand Prix], giving spectators a special treat.

Incidentally, I later received an appeal from the merchants' association

to hold these events in the capital Parnam once every year to attract tourists. Also, rumors floated that the [Elfrieden Bishoujo Grand Prix] was really a contest for the selection of the King's concubines so nobles who wanted marriage ties with the king sent young girls in their kin to participate, but that's unrelated right now so I'll leave it at that. Liecia seems to have heard the rumors from somewhere, though, and sent me piercing stares....



The judging which I predicted would take one day was extended for three days, it was on the fourth day that people with talents that made me say 'this is it' appeared before my eyes.

There was Liecia standing¹ next to me, who was sitting on the throne, on my right hand side on a lower step was Prime Minister Markus-dono, and on the left there stood the captain of the Royal Knights Ludwin-dono. By the way, this scene was being broadcast throughout the country using the orb brought out from the [Royal Voice Chamber].

¹ Though she is my fiancée our marriage had not yet been settled so she couldn't sit on the queen's seat Then in front of us, there were five youngsters standing in line.

One was a silver-haired elf-eared dark-skinned slightly-muscled soldier-ish young girl.

One was a young man with all his body covered in black clothes, with a somewhat disinterested face.

One was a blue haired girl, beautiful in a different way from Liecia's gallantness, one with a gentle air.

One was a homely little girl of about ten years old with fox ears springing out from her head.

And the last one was an indistinct plump man sweating greasy sweat.

"Your highness. This country's many talented people Your Highness have summoned had been recorded in the Royal Office archives. These people are the ones who showed particularly rare talents this occasion"

Markus announced, and then...

The plump man vigorously bowed² like a jumping locust.

The blue-haired beauty bowed, every single move she made full of grace.

The fox-eared little girl imitated them and bowed clumsily.

The young man in black saw them with sleepy eyes and bowed last.

The elf-eared girl stayed standing. Seeing that, the people around became startled.

² «TN: more like a kowtow, actually»

“You’re in the presence of His Highness the King. On your knees”

Ludwin-dono cautioned her quietly, but with anger mixed in his voice, but the elf-eared girl took no concern. On the contrary, she looked me straight in the eye and declared.

“I beg your pardon for our tribe’s custom. The soldiers of our tribe bow to no one but our masters. Also, it is a sign of virtue for our women to bow their heads to no one besides their husbands”

“But,”

“I don’t mind”

I held Ludwin, who was about to argue, back with my hand.

“It was us who appealed for their cooperation for the country. I will not be obstinate”

“..... As Your Highness wishes”

Ludwin-dono withdrew. He understands well.

The actions are in order to not be looked down on by the other party, but still show the King’s magnanimity. He was a splendid actor. Therefore I will perform as expected as well and play the tolerant king.

I stood up from the throne and faced them.

“All of you raise your heads, our position here is as the one who’s

seeking your support. You may abandon formalities and be at ease”

The four slowly stood up. I gave Markus a look, urging him to proceed.

Markus nodded, unrolled some kind of scroll and started reading.

“Then I shall henceforth hold the ceremony to announce the talents these people are endowed with and grant their rewards! Dark Elf of the [God-Protected Forest] Aisha Woodgard, step forward!”

“Yes”

This time the Elf-eared girl obediently did as she was told. Well, such pinpointed rules like “you shouldn’t step forward before you’re called out” shouldn’t exist anyway. The age of foreigners is, as a rule, difficult to tell so I don’t know how old she was, but she’s probably hasn’t reached 20 yet. She had dark brown skin and silver hair, was slim but moderately muscled, healthy. She had a somewhat intense expression but she’s well in the category of ‘beautiful girl’.

[Dark Elf]. Belonging to the class of minority peoples in the Kingdom of Elfrieden, they are a race with high combat prowess. They dwell in the God-Protected Forest instead of in towns and are allowed autonomy as protectors of the forest. An exclusive tribe with a high tribal identity....

With a calm pretense, I handily manipulated gloves I left in the library with my split consciousness and looked up the entry for Dark Elf in the [Elfrieden Children’s Encyclopedia]³. It takes time but it was convenient because it was like having a search engine in my head.

Incidentally, the [Dark Elves] in this kingdom weren’t Elves that fell and lost the favor of the gods like in fantasy, but simply that Elves with light skin and blonde hair were called [Light Elves] and ones with dark skin and silver hair were called [Dark Elves].

³ Because it was intended for children the contents are made short, my favorite for letting me get information in a short time “She showed remarkable talent in combat and as the winner of the [Kingdom’s Number One Fighting Tournament] earlier, her competence can truly be called the Kingdom’s Number One, she will be awarded that title!”

Oooh~, that fighting tournament's winner. Must be considerably strong.

But there's something I'm curious about.

"I was recruiting personnel for the country, but could you lend your strength to the country when it's needed? I read that a Dark Elf belongs only to their tribe"

"This is not the age where we can live just by protecting the forest. Without the country the forest will be in danger. There are Dark Elves who think we should change our ways. I am one of them"

Aisha declared that clearly.

"Still... That's a rather progressive outlook for a conservative tribe"

"Certainly, we're treated as heretics, but if we keep going as we are... O King"

"What is it?"

"I won't be needing the prize. So please allow me to speak freely"

The room rustled, because Aisha made a direct appeal to the King.

If times didn't change, it would be a capital offense even in Japan. This country seems to be the same.

Liecia and Ludwin-dono grabbed their blades but I stopped them with my hand.

"I'll allow it. Speak"

"Soma!? That's..."

"She had the resolve. As King I should lend an ear"

"I thank you. Then I'll speak"

Aisha then magnificently puffed her chest.

"Recently human incursions into the God-Protected Forest had intensified! They picked the blessings of the forests like mushrooms and wild plants and hunted the beasts of the forest. We understand that there are food troubles but if we lost those then it will be our turn to starve! We

reward the trespassers with nothing else than the sword. We already have clashed with them in several locations in the forest. O King, please somehow control the human trespassers”

“I see...”

In other words, she’s asking me to prohibit humans who’ve missed meals from hunting and gathering in their forest. Food troubles get more severe the more you go into areas where distribution is limited. If there’s an abundant forest nearby they’d go in even if it meant risking attacks from Dark Elves.

“I understand. There are already laws to restrict people from entering and leaving the God-Protected Forest so I can’t make any more prohibitions, but I’ll immediately provide food support for villagers around the forest. If there were still anyone who entered the forest even then, they’ll be designated as poachers and will be taken down by our side”

“Thank you very much”

As I said that Aisha put her hand on her chest and closed her eyes in exchange for bowing her head. Though I don’t know whether it’s a sign of thanks or relief at accomplishing her task.

“But Aisha, even though poaching is not allowed, if you consider the future don’t you think that you should trade with those outside the forest? I’m sure there are products from outside that would catch your interest?”

“That may be true, but... our side has nothing to trade them for”

“How about lumber? You do periodically thin the forest, don’t you?”

Since they live in the forest they shouldn’t have too many uses for wood, right. They would be in high demand in the outside world, so wouldn’t they make good trade goods.... I thought.

“Periodic... what?”

Aisha asked me back with a serious look, I was dumbfounded for a moment.

Eh? Could it be that this world doesn't do periodical thinning?

"Cutting down a moderate number of trees in order to maintain the forest, but..."

I said so while looking at Liecia and Markus and Ludwin, but everyone shook their heads. It seems this is the first time they heard about it. Aisha is the same.

"Protecting the forest.... by cutting trees?"

"It's obvious, right? If you leave trees alone they'll grow as big as they could and spread their leaves far and wide. Those leaves block the sunlight so young trees can't grow. Also when they grow close together they'll obstruct each other's growth, and in the end it'll be a fragile forest of only old trees. That fragile forest will easily be destroyed by snow or wind. Also, since sunlight is blocked the undergrowth will wither and the ground will lose water retention and be prone to landslides. That much is common sense.... right?"

Looking around there were only people shaking their heads (horizontally) in reply. Huuuuuh?

Immediately Aisha bowed down on the spot. She bowed so deep her head touched the carpet and was already doing a dogeza.

"My King!"

"W, what is it?"

"Please forgive me for my insolence earlier!"

"No, well, I don't really mind in the first place, but... wait, are you okay with bowing your head?"

"I don't mind! This very minute, I offer you as my master, my entire lifetime of loyalty!"

Wait wait what was she saying....

"Please make use of this life in any way. I dedicate my body and heart and chastity to Your Highness. If you tell me to fight, I'll fight. If you tell me to love, I'll love. If you tell me to be your mistress I will. If you tell me

to be your slave I will. If you tell me to die I'll die"

"What's with that dedication!? Just what happened in the space of minutes!!"

"But before you order me to die, please, listen to my last wish!"

"Hey are you listening! Ignoring!? You're ignoring me!?"

"Please somehow come with me to the God-Protected forest as soon as possible!"

Then she once again banged her head on the floor. Liecia and I are being creeped out by now.

..... I know that self-injuring dogeza is almost certainly a threat.

"OK, I heard what you said. So you want to take me to the God-Protected Forest, do you?"

"That's right! Also please teach us in the forest that 'periodical thinning'! Recently, the God-Protected Forest has been facing the problems Your Highness mentioned just now. Trees crowded together withered away, young trees don't grow, water became muddy, and the earth eroded when there's wind or heavy rain. I finally understood why after Your Highness said it"

"Doesn't the God-Protected forest have several thousand years of history? You didn't notice it until now?"

To my inquiry Liecia and Ludwin ashamedly agreed.

"The trees in the God-Protected Forest have long lifespans to start. So it went without notice until now when they are reaching the end of their lives.... "

"It's not someone else's problem, either. The mountains of Elfrieden don't get periodically thinned or anything so they might be facing similar situations"

"Well if they don't depend too much on the forests they'll probably be fine. When the old trees rot new ones are going to grow, even if forests disappeared from a natural disaster they'll be revived within ten years.

Nature itself goes in cycles like those, after all”

“But that’s fatal for the God-Protected Forest’s Dark Elves, isn’t it?”

Right you are. They live in the forest itself so once the trees disappear they’ll instantly become refugees.

Since they called themselves the forest’s protectors they should’ve managed it better, looks like they were caught off guard.

.... getting more refugees is a pain, I guess I need to quickly take care of this.

“All right. I’ll visit the God-Protected Forest in the near future”

“Oooh. Thank you very much Your Highness!”

“However, when that time comes I want you to allow people to enter to some extent. Forest management is the whole country’s problem. I’ll take this chance and open classes to establish [Forestry]”

“As Your Highness wishes”

Aisha bowed deeply once again and stepped back to where the other four were.

“Ludwin”

“Yes”

“I’d like you to examine Aisha’s disposition. I’m certain of her personal prowess, but whether she could lead an army is still unknown. If she does have that quality have her take command of a troop, if not I’ll employ her as commanding officer of my personal guard and a party member should I need to take action as Hero”

“Yes. Understood”

Later, after examining Aisha’s disposition, Ludwin evaluated that “She does have the qualities of a leader. However, her qualities as a single soldier surpasses that, it would be a waste to make her a leader”. She can be used as a leader but she seems to be a useful single horseman that could match against a thousand like Lü Bu. Anyway, she was to stand in

wait next to me as my personal guard during peacetime, and the official post of the [East Wind Warrior (Kochiji)] (a pun on [Hu Chi⁴ (Kochi)]) was freshly created for her, with the special permission to enter the King's bedchamber as his sole bodyguard.

⁴ «TN: Tiger Fool, alias of Xu Chu, who served as bodyguard for Cao Cao»

Thus Aisha's turn ended, but I'm already having it hard from the first one. I ended up handing out rewards, even though I only intended to call out people that seem useful....

(Could each of the other four possibly have their own circumstances?) My expectation was half right.



“Next. Hakuya Kwonmin-dono, step forward”

“.... yes”

The young man in black who leisurely stepped forward had sleepy eyes. His black clothes looked like clothes for clergymen being forcefully modified to Asian tastes, or a Shinto shrine priest's garment dyed black, the clothes gave off that feeling. His hair was short but was ruffled, apparently not having been taken care of. If you look at his white skin and feeble stature you'd get the impression of an indoor-type person. His movements were languid but his sleepy eyes looked straight at me. Somehow I feel like I'm being appraised.

“This person had shown his talent in knowledge by recommendation! He had memorized this country's laws, his knowledge, his memory, is believed to be without equal in the entire kingdom!”

So something like being able to recite the Six Codes⁵ from memory. That's certainly amazing.

‘Recommendation’ must mean that his application was coercively made on his behalf by his relatives.

.... what's this. Seems there's something hidden behind this.

⁵ «TN: The six books of law that make up the main body of law in Japan, S. Korea, and Taiwan»

“... Your talent is splendid. If you want to I can recommend you to a post in a judicial office?”

“No, just the reward will be fine”

Hakuya summarily rejected my recommendation.

“I was originally forced into applying by my uncle who’s been taking care of me, saying [You’re at a good age so don’t just go reading books all day, go and make yourself useful to society], it doesn’t seem like I can live up to any high expectations”

“By ‘books’ do you mean law?”

“No. I’m not picky with the genre. I read books of law, literature, or engineering. It’s my *raison d’être* to absorb any knowledge I don’t have”

“I see”

What is this. There’s something more to this as I thought. I feel like I’m missing something.

“... In that case, how about being Librarian of the Royal Library? There are probably books that don’t circulate in town there, you may freely inspect those with the power of the Librarian”

“Ooh, that is very good. If you say so, then by all means, please”

Hakuya finally showed an obviously happy face. Looks like he’s satisfied.

Seize every golden opportunity.

Rather than putting such a curious card away, it would be better to add it to my hand.



“Next, Gyna Doma-dono, step forward”

“Yes”

Changing places with Hakuya, the blue-haired beautiful girl stepped forward. Her age is about the same as Liecia, around 17 or 18, except the atmosphere Gyna was clad in made her seem more mature. She gracefully bowed her head, fluttering her long, swaying, billowy hair. Her thin one-piece dress didn't expose much but emphasized her feminine lines. I would've been charmed if it weren't for Liecia glaring daggers at me from my side.

"No, it's all right. I haven't forgotten about work so you can stop glaring"

"Is that so..."

Liecia turned her face away in a huff. Markus made a cough and continued.

"Your Highness, this person showed unique talent in both song and beauty. With her talents she won both the [Elfrieden Bishoujo Grand Prix] with her beauty and the [Kingdom of Talents] with her song. Indeed, she is this century's greatest songstress"

Both!? That's amazing.

"Haa~.... so the heavens do give two gifts"

"I am undeserving of such words"

My words mixed with admiration was replied by Gyna with a voice clear as a bell.

"I have heard that my ancestors were Lorelei. Song is in my blood"

Lorelei. Sea monsters who captivate and drown sailors using their beauty and song.

Her beautiful looks and lingering blue hair certainly brings the image of the Lorelei to mind.

"Then I must certainly hear your singing voice"

"As you wish"

"I know. Since this scene is being broadcast throughout Elfrieden by the

orb. How about you sing a song that'll lift up the people's mood"

"A song to lift up the people's mood... is it?"

Gyna looked a bit troubled.

"The songs of the Lorelei handed down in my family are basically sad songs..."

"Ah—, if you're not allowed to by law then I don't mind you singing anything"

"No, I only do not know of any such song. If I hear it once I can sing immediately, though"

"Humm... Ah, how about we do this then?"

I took a portable music player from my breast pocket. It was one of the few things I had on my person when I was summoned into this world. Since it's going to be unusable once the battery runs out I left it alone until now, but since it doesn't take up much space I always carried it with me. I stepped up to Gyna and put the earbuds in her ears.

"This is... what is this?"

"It plays music from there. I'll play it now"

"I"

The moment I turned on the switch Gyna's body flinched.

She was bewildered at first, but she seems to have gotten used to it and her body started to follow the rhythm. Five minutes later, as the song ended she took out the earbuds.

"I have memorised it"

"So you really could remember just by listening once"

"Yes. I shall sing then"

As I returned to my seat, she opened her mouth and clearly sang the opening lines of the song.

Hearing the song, I unintentionally slipped. Why? Because it was Sada

Masashi's [Ganbaranba].

Speaking of which, I didn't put in any dark songs so I didn't bother to check the song title. This song that was [everyone's song] was a odd one with the distinction of including rap-like Nagasaki dialect and [Denderaryuuba]. It seems that they do calisthenics with this song in Sada-san's hometown of Nagasaki.

But as expected from a Lorelei. She clearly sang the Nagasaki dialect rap portions that I who was born in Saitama couldn't understand at all. By the way, I heard from Liecia later that she couldn't even understand the parts in standard Japanese. Being able to understand the language this country's people spoke and conversely, making my spoken Japanese understood seems to be the Hero's power. Which is why the Japanese coming out of Gyna's mouth was, to this country's people, unfamiliar words.

Still, even though the meaning doesn't carry through, a catchy tune is catchy.



Everyone happily listened to Gyna's [Ganbaranba] acapella.

Amidst applause, Gyna who finished her song bowed her head.

It was a fun song. Thank you very much”

“No, thank you for such a magnificent voice”

“If I may, will Your Highness teach me more of your country's songs?”

“I certainly want you to sing. that's right, I'd like to increase the number of orbs we have, and if we can't, I'd like to turn the Royal Voice Chamber into a recording studio, I want to be able to deliver your songs to the people of this country at all times”

“Oh my. That is just like a dream Your Highness”

“I'll entrust it to you when the time comes. It's a noble cause”

Gyna stepped back, and now it's the fox-eared little girl's turn.

Chapter 2: First Let's Begin from ×× C

“Let us continue, Tomoe Inui-dono of the Mystic Wolf Tribe, step forward”

“H, hyes!”

Speaking with a quavering voice, the ten year old animal-eared little girl stepped forward, moving out her right arm and right leg at the same time. Mystic Wolf Tribe.... so those are wolf ears, not fox ears. Her sunburned skin and big, round eyes were cute. Her bushy tail coming out of her tribal-looking clothes were strained, likely because of the tension. What's this, so lovely.

“This young girl possesses the very rare ability to converse with wildlife. Upon taking her to the stables she was able to correctly guess everything from the horses' conditions to their history. According to herself, she heard it straight from the horses' mouths, a gift truly worthy to be called a divine gift”



Ability to talk to animals, is it. Another really surprising person appears.

While I was thinking that Liecia whispered from beside me.

“The Mystic Wolves’ country is way up north. There shouldn’t have been any in this country”

“..... So a refugee”

Several countries were engulfed by the Demon King Territory expansion. The people who lost their countries went south and entered the countries there as refugees putting pressure on the economy. Each country dealt with them in their own ways. There are countries that proactively sheltered them and there are those that worked to expel them, but even

the countries that shelter them put them to grueling manual labor like in the mines and such or took them as soldiers to fight the Demon Race, so from the point of view of the refugees, it was hell either way.

In our Elfrieden Kingdom we opened refugee camps near the capital Parnam. Right now their treatment is being 'put on hold'. Lending a helping hand to refugees while our own citizens are short on food supplies will only incite rebellion. That said, expelling or putting them to hard labor will incur the refugees' enmity. It would be terrible if they became covert terrorists. Even what we're doing now is bad for the public order but there's little we can do now besides maintaining the status quo.

In order to lend a hand to others, we need to first be content ourselves.

That's what I've been feeling recently.

"Well, I'm not going to go back after saying if you just have talent I have use for you. If they have talent I don't mind if they're our citizens or other country's or refugees. I don't have room to be picky"

"You can say that again"

Then the little wolf-eared girl who was introduced as Tomoe timidly opened her mouth to talk.

"U.... umm.... Mr. King...."

"Hm? What is it?"

"Um..... uhh..... I, I ha.... I have something to say...."

She's wringing her voice, she's squeezing it. Honestly, I can barely hear it.

"You have something to say? I don't mind so speak up"

"Hyes..... um... actually.... mumble mumble mumble"

"Hm, what is it? I can't hear you if you don't speak a little louder..."

"Um.... I...."

Tomoe's eyes teared up. Seeing a girl who can still be called a little girl with a face like that is somewhat emotionally harsh. Moreover, this scene

is being broadcast throughout the country. The people are going to say “the king made a little girl cry” behind my back.

“..... All right, all right. I’m going over there so please don’t cry”

“Auu...”

I walked close to the little girl, the guard Ludwin made a stern look but I silenced him with my hand, then I crouched down and put my ear near her mouth.

“Now I can hear you. Come, speak up”

“Yes. Actually...”

I said that and listened to the girl’s whispering, then...

“!?”

I doubted my ears. I stood up and looked at Tomoe straight in the eyes.

“..... Are you sure?”

“Y, yes”

“Have you ever told this to anyone before?”

“N, no.... I haven’t”

“Okay....”

It’s half reassuring and half annoying considering what’s to come after this.

It’s not about rare talents anymore. This little girl is unmistakably a ‘bomb’ for this country.

I need to take measures immediately.

..... Calm down, breathe in, breathe out. Don’t let anyone in the room see you shaking.

“Haa.... I’m a little bit tired. I’d like to put a short break in right now”

“Soma?”

I looked at the people around, Liecia seemed puzzled. The others are

making roughly the same response, but that doesn't matter. First of all I signaled Liecia, Markus, and Ludwin with my eyes and raised my voice.

"We shall take a half-hour break from now. We shall grant the rewards to the remaining two people including this girl after that. Gyna-dono"

"Yes, what shall it be, Your Highness?"

I called the songstress and she stepped forward.

"The scene in this room is being seen by the whole country through the Royal Broadcast. I'd feel sorry for making the people wait while we take a break. So I'm wondering if you could fill in the half hour with your songs?"

"Very well, Your Highness. Song is the pride of our clan. I shall sing with all my heart"

Gyna gracefully bowed as she said that. That moment, our eyes met.

A gaze that seems to have seen through something.... looks like she guessed that something's afoot. She understood, stayed silent, and did as asked, like a mature woman would.

Even without her looks and singing voice, this is the kind of subordinate I wanted.

"Well then, citizens, until later"

Thus the award ceremony was put on recess for a while.



While Gyna-dono is buying me time, I gathered only the people I can trust in the office.

The people here are just Me, Liecia, Markus-dono, Ludwin, and Tomoe. Incidentally, I had Aisha who swore an oath of loyalty and wouldn't leave my side stand guard from the other side of the door so that nobody listened in on us.

"Is this really something you have to be on high alert for?"

Liecia asked, bewildered, and I only nodded.

“It’s really an unlucky situation. Did anyone here hear what Tomoe-chan-said?”

“... I couldn’t hear her. Her voice was too small”

“I didn’t hear it either”

“Me too”

The three shook their heads.

“..... Then I guess I don’t have to worry about it reaching the Royal Broadcast”

“I think it’s fine. It’s not really that sensitive”

..... Phew. That’s a relief. That’s one thing off my back.

“Is it that bad?”

“Yeah. It’s quite literally a bombshell announcement”

Everyone’s eyes gathered on Tomoe-chan, she shrank even further.

It looks like she’ll have a hard time answering so I’ll answer in her place.

“You heard that she can talk to animals, right?”

“Yes. That’s an amazing ability”

“It seems she can talk to ‘Demonic Creatures’ with that”

The moment I said that, the room froze.

Everyone was at a loss for words, opening and closing their mouths like goldfish.

Now then, before we talk in detail about this there is some prerequisite knowledge you need to know.

Namely, that there is a difference between what this world calls [Demonic Creatures] and what we call [Demonic Creatures] in our world¹. In our world the things known as Demonic Creatures are grotesque creatures that are neither human nor animal, but in this world [Undeads] like skeletons or zombies or ghosts, [Devils] like gargoyles or

liliths or vampires, or [Brutes] like goblins or orcs or ogres are called Demonic Creatures, while every other living creature is called 'creatures just like normal creatures they look like'.

¹ «TN: Demonic Creatures, or Mamono, usually translates into Monsters in RPGs and novels, but I opted to put Demonic Creatures here because of their links to the Demon Race (Mazoku)»

Concretely speaking, Red Grizzlies measuring up to 4 meters in length are animals, Monitor Lizards, even if you can only see them as dinosaurs, are lizards, Giant Ants the size of people are insects, and Man Eaters that eat humans are still plants. Furthermore, slime-type creatures that can split and merge and liquefy are also (though I can't agree to it) treated as animals. By the way, Dragons and the like are called [Sacred Beasts] and are treated differently.

The reason these are not called Demonic Creatures is that they were already here in this world before the Demon King territory appeared. It's precisely because they were part of this world's ecosystem that their habitats can be isolated from humans. Practically, the horses in this world are what we would know as sleipnirs and domestic animals like cows or pigs or chickens all also have features arranged like monsters.

Returning to the topic, this means that what Tomoe meant was not animals, but [Demonic Creatures] like undeads or devils or brutes. Liecia drew near to Tomoe.

"What did you talk to and about what!?"

"I, it was a Kobold-san. Not like us.... they have a whole dog head, not just ears, but... the day before they attacked our village, they said [we can't bring ourselves to attack people from the same family, so run away]. It was a miracle that I could understand what the kobold-san said, but.... thanks to that we were saved from disaster..."

"Which means.... not just the Demon Race, but also Demonic Creatures have the capability for reason"

Ludwin said so, groaning. According to this world's common sense, Demonic Creatures don't have a consciousness good enough to hold

conversation with. That was exactly the reason why they are thought as like locusts ravaging the land with “eating” as their only goal or unmanned weapons wielded by war-loving Demon Race.

Exterminate the swarming locusts. Destroy the dangerous weapons.

Locusts and weapons won't come for revenge for their fallen comrades.

Therefore, don't hesitate and annihilate them.

.... The war against the Demonic Creatures in the world right now was generally done with that in mind.

But if those Demonic Creatures had capability for reason like Tomoe said, then Humanity had unwittingly entered a [War] with the Demonic Creatures. A quandary of a war with zero channels for dialogue. Humanity is wrapped in resentment against the Demonic Creatures for killing their family, burning down their homes, and taking away their land. But if this was a war, then it is possible that the side of the Demonic Creatures were also bearing the same grudges towards Humanity.

“If this leaks out to the countries...”

“It'll be a pandemonium”

I dropped my shoulders, so did Liecia.

I don't think all Demonic Creatures can be reasoned with. Seeing from the actual brutal acts they did, ones like the Kobolds who let the Mystic Wolf Tribe run probably only numbered a handful. But knowing that there are some Demonic Creatures that are like that, then the Demonic Creatures are not the enemy of humanity.

Right now, in face of the Demonic Creatures the nations have a united exterior.

If that kind of information spreads, it is possible that there would appear countries who prioritized their own profits and joined hands with the Demon King Territory. If that happens then it would be the downfall of humanity.

“Do you think the Empire knows about this?”

“..... I suppose they don't yet. With Tomoe-chan's special ability they would have gradually come to a mutual understanding. Even if they had contact they shouldn't have been able to hear anything but animal cries”

“Which means that this information is right now under the monopoly of our country. Really...”

We got our hands on something incredible.

Really a bomb. It's something useful but if we don't use it well it won't end in just burns.

“I, I'm so sorry...”

In response to my sigh, Tomoe-chan shrank, to which Liecia gave me a poke.

“Ah, no, I'm not blaming you. In fact, I'm thinking I'm glad you came to this country. I shudder to think what happens if another country got hold of this information”

“But are you going to hide this? If we're found out hiding such a vital piece of information as this we'll get branded as the enemies of humanity, you know”

“We would, won't we. It won't be good if we don't hide it well and they think we're ambitious”

I can only hold my head in agony to what Ludwin pointed out.

Liecia blinked in surprise.

“You're not ambitious?”

“Yes and no”

“Which is it!?”

“As a statesman, I can't say I don't have any. Anyway, the current situation where we're fighting a war to exterminate each other is not good. Fighting until one side is completely exterminated would leave the other side on the verge of death, as well. I guess we need to leak this information a little bit at a time”

I've made up my mind. I said while looking around me.

"We'll leak information to the surrounding countries that [some of the Demonic Creatures show systematic movements]. If we leak rumors saying [maybe some of the Demonic Creatures have reason], the countries should move more carefully. At least they'd try to find out if the rumors are true.

"But that way, won't they finally find out what we knew? If that happens then won't it be useless to hide the information?"

"No Markus. Our trump card is not this information. It's Tomoe-chan"

"M, me!?"

Tomoe-chan darted her eyes in surprise and I gave a firm nod.

"Even if people knew the Demonic Creatures possess intelligence we have Tomoe-chan's ability. If the nations wanted to negotiate with the Demonic Creatures we can talk with them through Tomoe-chan while the others think of a way to do so. This is a great advantage"

I don't know how far Elfrieden could negotiate by itself.

However, by having a unique pipeline we could seize all dialogue rights from the nations and avoid the situation where we're not granted the right to talk. Our responsibility will increase accordingly, but it's better than entrusting this country's direction to someone else. We don't want our future decided for us in a place we don't know.

"So Tomoe-chan. Our country must shelter for you with all our power"

"Hyes!? M, me!?"

"Yes. I can say without overstatement that you're much more important than me now. Honestly speaking, if some other country got wind of this and took you away this country's done for"

"No way... that... can't be true?"

Tomoe-chan restlessly looked around but not a single person affirmed. It's no exaggeration to say Tomoe-chan holds the fate of this country in her hands. I can't say for sure but another country could possibly be

pretending not to hear anything and 'dispose' of her right about now. That's how 'crucial' Tomoe-chan's existence is.

"Which is why in order to give Tomoe-chan the best protection I want to have you live in the castle. If we leave you in th refugee camp we won't be able to protect you when the time comes"

"Au..."

"Please wait"

Markus-dono raised his hand.

"Isn't it a bit suspicious to have somebody that's not royalty live in the castle?"

"Then please think of a way she can be considered royalty"

"You sure are quick to say that... There are several ways in order for a townsperson to be considered royalty. One of them is to have her be adopted by Your Highness, but this is not possible since Your Highness is not yet married. Your marriage with Princess is going to take several years of preparation, too"

"But you see..."

"Don't impose her on me"

Liecia huffed and turned her face away. For Liecia to have a home life with the ten-year old Tomoe-chan as daughter immediately upon becoming a wife is... I totally can't imagine.

"Is there any other way?"

"Your highness can marry her as a concubine"

"That's... dangerous in several ways, isn't it?"

She's a grade school age girl you know? Backbeord-sama² is going to suddenly show up going damn you lolicons!

² «TN: <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/beako>»

"For a political marriage her age is barely within the allowed limits"

“But it’s way out for me mentally!”

“Soma... If you do marry her then I’m breaking off our engagement”

“Why are you attacking me!?”

Somehow even Liecia is looking at me with cold eyes. I don’t have that kind of hobby!

“Anyway, can’t the previous royal couple adopt her?”

“Hm. I suppose that’s fine”

“It’s fine! I’ve always wanted a little sister!”

“Hawawawa”

Being suddenly hugged by Liecia, Tomoe-chan fell into a panic. Liecia even wore a relaxed face she never showed up until now. On that subject, as Liecia’s fiancé she’d be my stepsister too, right?

A dog-eared loli stepsister... too many attributes.

“But but, I, I have a family”

Tomoe-chan said as she escaped her (to be) elder sister’s overly close skinship.

“I have a mother and a tiny little brother waiting back at camp”

“Ah, being an adoptee is just for your position so it’ll be fine. If Tomoe-chan becomes my stepsister then your mother and younger brother is family too, so I don’t mind you living together with them in the castle. Their living costs will be arranged on my side and if they want to work we’ll find them a job in the castle”

“Um.... in that case.... all right”

Tomoe-chan nervously accepted. Phew. Now I felt like I found a good spot to rest. Not that everything had been solved peacefully but I found something I can overturn the status quo with.

I picked up a stepsister on the way but since she’s cute then all is well I suppose.

“Now we should get back to the assembly hall soon. We shouldn’t burden Gyna-dono’s throat any more than this”

The thirty minutes are going to run out soon. This is about the limit for delaying things.

“Let’s stop the reward for this talent at just the prize, if we suddenly announce that she’s going to be adopted by the previous royal couple people are going to suspect something. Let’s give the matter some time and announce it some other day. I’d like all of you to act with that in mind. Understood?”

“““ Yessir “”””

Well then, now there’s only one person remaining. I wonder what talent does he have.

.... I hope he doesn’t have any special circumstances.

Chapter 2: First Let's Begin from ×× D

«AN: This starts with a different person's POV. Apologies»

Thirty minutes have passed since the King declared a recess and now the award ceremony was resumed.

This is the little Mystic Wolf girl's turn to receive his compliments.

I watched that scene together with the other prize winners.

"Your talent. Please use them for the sake of our country"

"H, hyesh! Undershtood!"

..... she stuttered, how cute.

I wonder what that cute little girl said to make 'the King's expression change and declare a recess'. She was also the only one called out to during recess. It's indubitably something important for sure, but the me right now has no way of knowing it.

Ever since I arrived here I had been observing 'that' King.

He looked commonplace. The rumors say he was summoned as a hero, but the air he had around him was just like a common person on the streets. He wore no crown, held no cane, and wore casual clothes, though the design is unfamiliar. He did not look like a King even when standing before the throne. But then his eyes would shine with a kingly glint every now and again, a very elusive personage.

His actions as a King until now gets a passing mark, I guess.

He showed open-mindedness when taking the Dark Elf warrior's request and also revealed a solution to the problem she's been having without even aiming to. He showed consideration to the people with the Lorelei songstress' case, overlooked my 'deliberately insolent attitude', and furthermore considered what I might have wanted and granted me that. Seeing the little Mystic Wolf girl's case he seems to be good at ad-libbing. He does have some unrefined points but well, he gets a passing mark with this much.

However, the real test comes now.

I looked in the direction of the plump man sweating maybe cold sweat or greasy sweat next to me. It's his turn to get a reward next. I've heard what his talent was from the man himself. Then as far as I can tell, his talent is 'the talent this country needs the most'.

I wonder how the young King would see and judge him.

Will he show contempt to the man for his unsightly appearance, with his perfectly round belly and double chin.

Or maybe he will make him a laughing stock in front of the whole country.

Or maybe he won't go that far but still disregard the importance of his talent.

If he did any of that then I can't help but consider him to have no worth as a King. I don't feel like working myself to the bone for an unworthy ruler. If that happens I think I'll lock myself as a librarian and a bookworm in the Royal Library like he recommended.

"Let us continue, Poncho Pannacotta-dono of Potte village, step forward!"

"Y, yes!"

As the Prime Minister Markus-sama called out, the plump man called Poncho waddled forward with his round belly wobbling. There were snickers coming from the audience looking at such a comical sight. making Poncho's round face even redder. Even the Princess Liecia leaked a smile like she just saw something funny. Then I looked towards the King, and he had put on a 'serious face'. Not a laughing or dissatisfied one, just a serious look at Poncho's face.

"This may be easy to see but this man's talent is that of 'eating'. During our current recruitment there were many people putting forward their [Big Eater] talent but none prevailed against this man. Also, his love towards food is out of the ordinary, he had walked the four corners of the world sampling the local products and delicacies, the person himself

claimed to have [eaten mostly everything that can be eaten]. Save for the fact that he had spent all of his assets for his culinary travels ahem. In any case, this is a talent that can be said to have no equal in this country”

“I’ve been waiting for this!”

The King moved before Markus-sama finished reading.

He then stood in front of Poncho and took his hands with a gleeful look in his face.

“I’m glad that you’ve accepted my appeal! I’ve wanted a capable person like you!”

“He.... ah..... eh?”

Poncho became flustered. His brain couldn’t catch up to the King’s words.

When he finally did understand, his face cramped.

“Y, Your Highness, you were waiting for me!?”

“That’s right! This talent search was held in part for the purpose of looking for personnel like you! You are the person who will save this country! Rather than any other talented person, I’m more happy that you’ve come. I’m glad I told the officials to recommend people like you if they saw you”

“T, to go that far... is my talent really that important?”

“Yes, the knowledge you gained sampling the local products and delicacies is the key to the country’s salvation”

Being told that by the King, Poncho became flooded in tears and sweat.

“I everyone called me a fatty and a pig ... they said I was wasting my money on food ... I only travelled because I wanted to eat, and I knew they were correct ... can this gluttony of mine really be useful for the country?”

The King gave the crying Poncho a pat on the shoulder.

“Let the haters say what they like. Even doing a stupid thing can

become a proper talent if you do it thoroughly! Your gluttony at all expense will save this country! So please lend me your knowledge!”

Being appealed so earnestly by the King, Poncho wiped his tears with his sleeve.

“Y, yes! If my¹ ... no, my² knowledge can be of use please use it in any way”

¹ «TN: Oira»

² «TN: Watashime»

He replied energetically.

Looking around, almost everyone couldn't grasp the situation and were flabbergasted. The only ones who remained composed were Markus-dono who was showing self-restraint cultivated through his duties and the Dark Elf Aisha-dono who strangely had complete faith in the King, and also Gyna Dorma-dono who somehow was looking at the King with appraising eyes.

The King turned back towards the throne and said to Markus-dono.

“Prime Minister! There is a custom where the King grants a “name” to a retainer who shows promise, right?”

“... ah, yes. There is, but ...”

“Then Poncho. I will grant you the name [Ishidzuka]. It's the name of an ‘Insatiable food-searching evangelist’. Be proud and work under that name”

“Y yessir! Thank you very much!”

That was the moment Poncho Ishidzuka Pannacotta was born.

The first retainer King Soma employed for himself was the plump high-appetite Poncho.

I wanted to shout in joy.

Good performance! This King knows where his priorities lie!

It was a test for the King whether he would employ Poncho or not. Even

if he didn't realize his worth but still employed him because he might be useful in the future he would have passed, and I consider him failed if he rejected him just by his appearance, but I never thought he would welcome him to this extent. This is a happy miscalculation.

He might just be able to save this country.

At least he is a worthy lord to serve under.

I felt excitement simmering from within myself.

.... Looks like I can't let myself be just a bookworm.

"O King, may I have your ear?"



"O King, may I have your ear?"

After all the rewards have been handed and I was just about to declare the end of the ceremony, the black-clothed young man Hakuya Kwonmin stepped forward and knelt. His sleepy eyes were now open wide. I was amazed at how the atmosphere around him had changed so much.

I had a hunch and asked Hakuya.

"You have something to say as well?"

"Yes. This is impolite of me but I have been recommended by someone else for this matter, but I want to make a self-recommendation"

Self-recommendation. He wants to promote himself?

"Hm I've granted you the position of the Librarian of the Royal Archives, right? By self-recommendation you mean that's not enough? What do you wish for?"

"If I may, then I'd like to work under Your Highness"

"Not as a librarian?"

"Yes. I believe that my knowledge can support Your Highness's hegemony if you will allow it"

"Ha ha ha"

He grandly said ‘hegemony’, and he said he can support it with his knowledge, what is he thinking, I wonder. A strategist supporting military and diplomacy, or a prime minister³ supporting internal affairs, maybe ... or maybe even a [Prime Minister⁴] supporting everything like Zhuge Liang or Cao Cao. I looked Hakuya straight in the face.

³ «TN: Saishou / 宰相»

⁴ «TN: Joushou / 丞相»

“This is interesting, but do you have the talent for that?”

“I believe I do”

“Not just reciting the law?”

“Excuse me but I believe I said [I’ve read many books about Law, Culture, and The Arts⁵]. I have driven various fields of study into this head, from Astronomy above to Geology below”

⁵ «TN: AKA Engineering»

Somehow he says stuff like Toyotomi Hideyoshi, huh... but this makes the feeling of discomfort I had earlier clear. I was stuck on the ‘reading every book’ part even though he could recite law. In other words his talent did not come from only studying law. For him, being able to recite law was merely one fragment of the knowledge he had studied.

“Why did you hide your talent earlier”

“Because I wanted to make sure the lord I serve is worthy”

“Why do you reveal your talent now”

“Because I have made sure the lord I serve is worthy”

So full of confidence. Is he just all talk or does he have something to show for it.

..... I still couldn’t judge either way right now.

“I’ll leave you to Markus! I’ll place this person in a rank that befits his abilities”

“Understood”

“Thank you very much”

Markus and Hakuya gave a simultaneous bow.

Several days later Markus would come rushing into my office in tears saying “My King! Did you tell me to teach you how to ride a flying dragon!”, but there was no way I could know that right now. This was my chance meeting with the man who would later be called [Elfrieden’s Black Eminence⁶]

⁶ «TN: 黒衣 can be “black clothes” or “one who pulls the strings behind the stage” after the kabuki stagehands that took this role who are dressed in black»



In history there are scenes that would easily be turned into plays in later eras. The requirements for those are One, it has to be the turning point of an age.

Two, there has to be a star appropriate for a play.

These are the two requirements.

In the history of Elfrieden, the event that would be reenacted in dramas in later eras the most was [King Soma’s Personnel Gathering].

This scene is said to have three leading actors.

From Soma’s point of view, this scene was just another one of his exploits, but from the point of view of Hakuya Kwonmin who would come to be called the [Black Eminence], it was the [turning point of an era], and from a certain person’s point of view, it was a Cinderella story that turned their life upside down.

But opinions are divided as to who the third person is.

There are those who put the spotlight on the Dark Elf from the forest who pledged allegiance to a her master, the East Wind Warrior who would always stand guard beside the King, the [East Wind Warrior Princess] Aisha Woodgard.

There are those who put the spotlight on the person discovered by the

King learning the songs of the country, who brought forth the concept of [Lorelei], Elfrieden's [Idols], the [Prima Lorelei] loved by the King and the People, Gyna Dorma.

There are those who put the spotlight on the refugee to whom King Soma and Queen Liecia fell in love with at first sight, the one ushered in as the pair's stepsister, who would later be called the [Virtuous Wolf Princess], Tomoe Inui.

But to say who was reenacted the most, that would probably be Poncho Ishidzuka Pannacotta.

The way of the man who was ridiculed by the people around him as a fatso and boringly eat large amounts of food took the [King's Personnel Search] as a chance and was able to turn his life around, would rouse the people, weary with the burdens of everyday life, into full vigor and be reenacted in dramas time and time again. Although being called a Cinderella story despite being a plump man might not be apropos, he was not hated but loved, and they would say it was just right for him.

Also, because the fact that the King accepted Poncho was passed on throughout the kingdom, it had the unforeseen secondary effect where talented people gathered in Elfrieden saying "If even he was appointed then I can too ..." In later years, a proverb meaning "if we has to start somewhere then let's do something within reach", would be coined out of these historic events: [First let's begin from Ishidzuka]



"Hey Soma, ever thought of returning to your country?"

That night, after the dinner party with the award-winners after the award ceremony.

Liecia and I were having tea in the royal office that had already became my private room⁷. It's surprisingly convenient since it would be waste of money to deliberately make a room for my private use, and this way I can get to work straight after waking up. Though I think that way of thinking is somewhat workaholic-ish....

As we were taking a breather, Liecia asked me that question.

⁷ I usually sleep on the bed set on a corner of the room.

“What’s this all of a sudden, and we’ve just reached a good milestone by getting money and personnel, too”

“I asked precisely because we’re at a milestone I’ve been curious about it”

Liecia said while tracing the rim of her cup with her finger and having her eyes downcast.

“Soma was called out of our own convenience and worked more than we expected. ... and yet we who called you over don’t know of any way to send you back. We’re the worst, huh”

“.....”

“If I were in your shoes I think I’d be mad. So it wouldn’t be strange if you’re angry, either”

Liecia raised her face and looked me straight in the eyes.

“If you have any complaints then tell me. I’ll do anything if it will make up for it. So please, I hope you don’t come to hate this country, the country that you rule over”

“..... A girl shouldn’t say something like that so easily”

I plopped my hand on Liecia’s head.

Sheesh ... why do you have to look like you’re going to cry.

“When a girl says something like that to me I feel like giving in to my lust”

“Um If I may then please spare me the torture devices ...”

“What kind of person do you think I am!”

I don’t have that kind of hobby maybe, I think.

“If I were pressed to ask then I’d like a miniskirt maid course, I guess”

“..... if you will it”

“If we have the money for that I’d rather put it in the budget,” I said and smiled.

“Besides, I don’t feel like going back to my world all that much. There’s nobody waiting for me over there, too....”

“You mean...”

“I don’t have family. My foster parent – my grandfather just recently....”

Both my parents seem to have passed away before I was aware of the world. I was raised in my paternal grandparents’ house ever since, but grandma went when I was in high school, and grandpa continued on as if making sure that I successfully graduated from university with his own eyes. One of the reasons I had a preference for stability was because I had the handicap of never experiencing having parents, and I wanted to give grandfather and grandmother some peace of mind. Which is why my only regret was that I could not show them that I gained a stable job.

“Um ... sorry”

“No need to say sorry. ... rather than finding a way to send me back, I’d prefer having you bring my family’s graves here, I guess. I don’t want the graves of the grandfather who took care of me left unattended”

“I will absolutely help you on that”

Looking at Liecia gripping her hand tightly into a fist, I unintentionally leaked a bitter smile.



[Character Sketch: Markus Hatov]

A half-elf whose service spanned the two reigns of Elfrieden’s 13th King Alberto and 14th King Soma. In Alberto’s time he served as prime minister, giving counsel to the King, and in Soma’s time he yielded his post after the [Black Eminence], Hakuya Kwonmin, distinguished himself and he became the [Shichuu⁸], busy in charge of assembling the Royal Court. He gently passed Alberto’s reign and was busy during Soma’s reign, and because his work changed when the reigning King changes, he

went on to be called the [Water of the Royal Palace].

⁸ «TN : Shizhong / 侍中 »

Chapter 3: The King's Brunch A

Nowadays, the great tumult from Souma's gathering of talented people had calmed down.

But now, a ghost story about the land near Elfrieden[1] Castle circulated in mass.

According to the story, 『In the dead of the night, a mannequin doll was loitering around』. In the story, the mannequin was a type of doll with joints in its arms and legs, had no face and was used to decorate a clothing shop, however this mannequin clutched a sword in both of its hands and hunted monster by itself night after night A certain adventurer's testimony:

『The other day, I was receiving a quest to escort a merchant and was walking in the highway at night, but unfortunately we were surrounded by Zelrin[2], a Gel subspecies. Although they were weak individually they are difficult to fight in high numbers, but at that same time, a mannequin doll, wielding a sword in both hands, staggered from the direction of the castle and started attacking the Zelrin. We became afraid of that eerie sight and started to run away as fast as we could... What the heck was that really?』

Another adventure's testimony:

『It was several days ago. I received a request from the guild to intercept a group of hobgoblins that had crossed the border from the north and were heading towards the south. We had lain in wait to ambush them in a valley on their marching route, but they never arrived. Becoming impatient, we then conducted a search, but the hobgoblins had all been massacred and standing there, still in the midst of their corpses, was a mannequin doll. My swordsman comrade, who thought that it was a new Monster reinforcement, started to slash at it, but was repulsed with the doll's two swords style. My mage comrade started to attack it with fire, but it was nimble like an eagle, and fled the place with unbelievable speed. That.... was perhaps some sort of new unmanned weapon made by

the Demon Lord, don't you agree?』

There were many sightings of it, so although it was called a ghost story, it almost surely “exists”. However, at the time the adventurer guild started to recognize its existence and officially gave out a subjugation quest to capture that mannequin, the reports of its appearances suddenly came to a stop.

Today, the people wonder whether or not the rumor was a deliberate prank by somebody.



「.....and that is what the story of the rumor that had circulated around.」(Liecia) 「Eh... Is that so... (in monotone)」(Souma)

Liecia[3], who was sitting on the bed, was telling me a story as I was leaning on the sofa. I replied without stopping my hand and then followed up with “Needle”. Her face became a bit sullen.

「What is it? Are you not interested in such story?」(Liecia)

「No, it's not like that.....」(Souma)

「As a king, I think it's important to solve a potential problem on the castle's land.」(Liecia) 「Ah.... Then it will be fine. Since that mannequin doll will never appear again...」 (Souma) 「.....How do you know about it?」 (Liecia)

「Hmm, Well.... You know...」(Souma)

I made a vague answer while continue to stuff “cotton”. Finally, after I sew the back, it will be complete.

「.....That reminds me. What have you been doing this entire time?」 (Liecia) 「What am I doing? I thought you knew after seeing that. It's needlework.」(Souma) 「Then, why are you purposely doing needlework in my room?!」(Liecia)

「There's no other way, right? Since my room is more like an office...」 (Souma) Thanks to the『Multiple Simultaneous Parallel Thinking』[4] and 『Telekinesis』[5] (the skill up version of 『Weak Telekinesis[6]』, I could

now manipulate objects that had the same weight as me, but only on inorganic things and not living organism), I was now able to make the pen continue working while the original body took a break. However, my room was, as usual, still established as an office. As one would expect, a place where government officials continuously go in and out of was not place where somebody could take a rest.

「Moreover.....(Souma)

『Your Majestyyy!!!! Your Majesty , where are youuuuuuuuuuuu?!』(Aisha)

「.....Because of that DarkElfAisha my heart has no time to rest.」

(Souma) 「I can sympathize with you....」(Liecia)

Nowadays, Aisha[7] was never separated from my side.

Dark Elves had a law that they were proud of that said that they will protect and stay at the side of the person they had pledged allegiance to until their life had come to an end. That's why I acknowledged Aisha's position as my Guard. Now, whenever I work, whenever I take a meal, whenever I'm sleeping, even whenever I'm in the bath and toilet, she always tried to stay by my side. Although it was a problem for a person not yet officially employed to stand beside the King, since she was both beautiful and extremely loyal, the Imperial Guards under Ludwin[8] had given their tacit consent for her conduct. Nowadays, even the one who distinguished himself as my Right-Hand Man, Hakuya[9], said: 『It doesn't matter if it's with Princess Liecia, Aisha-dono[10] or Juna-dono[11], please quickly make some children. If you had some children, even their births can become a diplomatic card that we can use.』(Hakuya) He said this in a calm voice. Well, even in my previous world's history, diplomatic marriage gave birth to 『The Empire Where Sun Never Sets』[12] or the Habsburg House Dynasty, or the 『Dual Empire of Austria-Hungary』. However, nowadays for Japanese (even if they enjoy Harem Romance), such notion about producing children for the sake of the house was an outdated concept and they refrained from it.[13]

Rishia glared at me with scornful eyes.

「People with high social status is a magnet for beautiful women,

right?」(Liecia) 「...Please leave me out of it. Even when I finally can take a good rest..... Huh? That's right, where is Tomoe-chan[14]?」(Souma) 「Ah, Tomoe is with my parents. Mother[15] really adores her.」(Liecia) Ever since Tomoe-chan became Liecia's stepsister several days ago, she had been living in this castle. Of course as promised, she is together with her family and baby brother. By the way, Tomoe-chan's mother become a day-care worker in the experimental newly introduced 『Castle's Day Care Nursery』 that is established to stimulate female social progress. It also mixed with the duty of Wet Nurses to nurse babies along with taking care of the other people's children. Since the current society didn't have concept of maternity leave[16], if the castle's maids have children then they must retire. Unless they were 'touched' by the King, the majority of the maids will end up unmarried in life. But with this nursery, the young maids could have peace of mind to find marriage partners, so this institution had become very popular.

The talks had veered away... But basically, Tomoe-chan had two mothers inside the castle. At first they were quite confused, but nowadays both of them cherished her as their daughter. Liecia stood up and put her hand on the back of the sofa where I sit down as she took a peek at my hand from the back.

「Even if you say you have free time, to spend that time sewing is..... Is that possibly, a plush doll?」(Liecia) 「Ah this? Papapapan ♪ 『Mushashi Boy-kun』♪」[17](Souma)



I had finished sewing the back so I took the doll in my hand and presented it a manner similar to a certain robot cat took out his tools.[18]

「Musashi Boy?」(Liecia)

「Yes. In my world...It can be considered as a rare animal?」(Souma)

『Mushashi Boy-kun』is a mascot character[19] of the town where I live; it was a cute deformed[20] two head talls[21] of the Musashi's follower, Monk Benkei.[22] The head is covered with a white hood and it wore a waist-long Juzu[23] on its shoulder. It was a really dignified figure of Benkei. However, peeking below the gallant thick eyebrows were adorable acorn-like eyes that utterly erased any majesty it had. Because of that Gap[24] that stole the hearts of the citizens, it became unexpectedly popular. By the way, the city where I live “has absolutely no relation”

with Musashi's Monk Benkei; the reason why they chose Benkei was because the Saitama prefecture was formerly called as 『Land of Musashi』 [25].

I had boorish thoughts like「Then isn't Miyamoto Musashi[26] or Musashimaru[27] also acceptable?」 or 「Do you want to introduce the entire Saitama if you bundle it as Land of Musashi?」. But since it's just a mascot character; I should really just relax. Anyway, I had already sewn the 40 cm tall Musashi Boy-kun doll.

「Kuh... This is unexpectedly too cute for me to get angry with.」(Liecia)
「Unexpected, right?」(Souma)

「But why this kind of thing?」(Liecia)

「My ability is really versatile. See.」(Souma)

The Musashi Boy-kun in front of us started to move by itself. Then it started to skillfully break dance with its short arms and legs. Then, with its head on the floor, both of its short legs spread out and started to spin like Spinning Back Kick[28]. It was really skillfully done but also incredibly surreal.

Liecia opened her eyes really wide and looked dumbfounded.

「Noooiyaaa..... What is this!?!」(Liecia)

「By using 『Multiple Simultaneous Parallel Thinking』and 『Telekinesis』 I can completely move this doll like some sort of clone. It feels like I can sense myself inside this stuffed doll?」(Souma) 「Do you want to become a street performer?」(Liecia)

「I think that's a good idea. Can I earn money that way after quitting as King?」(Souma) 「Don't say stupid things. I won't forgive you if you quit halfway!」(Liecia) 「... I understand. Let's leave that aside.」(Souma)

I passed two knives to Musashi Boy-kun. Then the Musashi Boy-kun, that was only made from ordinary felt cloth at the outside and a lump of cotton on the inside, could hold them like the way an adult holds combat knives. Musashi Boy-kun then brandished the two knives like Musashi Miyamoto.

Liecia was amazed by it.

「No way... This is a doll right?」(Liecia)

「No matter what kind of things the doll take, they are still counted as parts of the doll. I feel he stress that comes from the weight of it, but the doll won't get crushed by the weight. As an experiment, I manipulated another doll to carry weapons and battle with monsters, but there were no problems in fighting with them.」(Souma) 「Doll and monsters, wait a moment... Could it possibly be that the rumored mannequin was a result of Souma's action!？」(Liecia) 「Ah. I was just experimenting with a different doll inside the castle.」(Souma) But I never thought it would become a rumor. Even though I was deliberately hunting monsters at night in order to avoid attention, but I think that because of that it had become an unwanted ghost story.

「But because of the frequent battles with the monsters, I have discovered something: Just by receiving experience points, the doll's movements improved. The doll can even use the Intermediate Level Dual Sword Skill【High Speed Rotational Cut】[29]」(Souma) As soon as I was saying that, Musashi Boy-Kun spread both of the knives in its hand and then started to rotate with high speed with 『Gyuiin』 sound effects. It looked like a giant spinning top, but anything that approached it from the side will surely get cut into two.

「Perhaps the experience points from the doll also are given back towards the real body?」(Liecia) 「Then can't that be considered as a Cheat ability? Because it's like the experience points automatically rose by themselves.」(Souma) 「That didn't happen?」(Liecia)

「Sadly yes, there was no experience point feedback. Even if the Doll can use a skill, I can't use it. For that reason, I don't really get any boosts in physical strength or spiritual power. Thanks to that, the real body is still weak.」(Souma) 「Then how about you train it a little?」(Liecia)

「Then I think I will be able to use the doll more effectively. Even if I'm alone, I can be very strong, since I can surround myself with three strong dolls standing beside me.」(Souma) 「That is not how a Hero should fight,

right?[30]](Liecia)

Liecia told me in astonishment. I'm sorry to say but I can't refute her opinion.

In the fantasy genre of my former world I think that my “job” can be called 『Puppeteer』, 『Doll User』 or 『Dollmancer』[31]. The main gist of those types of job was 『Mid-Range Support Type』. It was very different from a Hero who gave more of an impression of being a 『Near and Mid-Range Attacker Type』. Well, it seems that in this country the Hero had a meaning of 『Someone who Leads the Age of Reformation』[32].

「Seeing you, the image of a Hero inside my heart has been thoroughly shattered.」(Liecia) 「Don't worry. I also feel the same.」(Souma)

Not only had I managed the country's domestic affairs for a month, I also don't really have any plans other than managing domestic affairs for the next several months. Can I really be called a “Hero”? No, I am “One” irony.

Suddenly, a knock came from outside the door.

「Yes, come in.」(Liecia)

「Please excuse me」(Serina)

The person who said it while bowing her head was Liecia's chambermaid, Serina-san.[33] She was three years older than Liecia and wore glasses that really suited her appearance as an intellectually beautiful woman. It doesn't mean that I really know her, but I know from Liecia's story that she was a woman Liecia considered as an older sister.

Serina looked at my face and then politely bowed to me.

「Your Majesty, Hakuya-sama want me to pass a message to you : 『Poncho-sama had started assembling everyone.』」(Serina) 「It came at last! I have waited for this for a long time!」(Souma)

I immediately stood up and took Liecia's hand.

「Let's go, Liecia!」(Souma)

「Eh? Wai-? Wha-!?!」(Liecia)

We left the room as quick as the wind as Serina-san bowed and saw us off.



En route, we picked up Aisha and then went to the conference room where several people were already assembled.

In the middle of the room was a round table where Hakuya (who had succeeded Marcus's[34] position as Prime Minister), Tomoe-chan, Juna-san, and at last Poncho Ishizuka[35] were sitting. As Ludwin and Marcus were busy with another matter, they couldn't come right away, so all the assembled people in here were the talented people I had scouted earlier.

「Your Majesty.」(Hakuya)

「Ah, please sit down. I just came here on my own accord!」(Souma)

Seeing that everyone tried to stood up, I raised my hand to stop them before Liecia and I took our seat. It was only Aisha, who for some reason, immediately stood beside me when I took my seat. Honestly, this was bothering me but I couldn't do anything about her since when I ordered her to take a seat, she firmly ignored my command. Wasn't I a ruler? ...Well, let's just leave this matter aside for now.

「I deeply express my thanks to everyone for your efforts in coming to this place.」(Souma) 「T-t-there is no need for it, Your Majesty! I-I-I am deeply sorry to cause this inconvenience!」(Poncho) 「Your Majesty, I wish for you not to lower your head so easily.」(Hakuya) Hakuya, who stood beside the flustered Poncho, began to frown.

「If someone like Your Majesty, who stands above others, starts to debase themselves, it might cause others to humiliate Your Majesty.」(Hakuya) 「I don't need to act in such a grandiose way and keep my dignity in here. After all, I think everyone in here as a friend rather as a retainer or a citizen.」(Souma) 「I think that words is unworthy of us, Your Majesty.」(Juna)

Juna-san softly bowed. Juna-san was behaving in was that were really picture-perfect.[36]

On the contrary, Tomoe-chan was very nervous to the point where she started chattering her teeth.

「Am-Am I also a friend of the king?」(Tomoe)

「That's wrong. Tomoe-chan is my sister-in-law, right?」(Souma)

「Ah, that's right.」(Tomoe)

「Yes. That's why, don't refer me as King but as 『Nii』 instead.」(Souma)

「Ah, not fair! Then, also call me『Oneechan』!」(Liecia)

「Etto...」*staring at us with upturned eyes* 「Souma-nii. Liecia-oneechan!」[37] (Tomoe) 「『YES ! ! 』」(Souma)(Liecia)

Looking at Tomoe-chan's adorable behaviour, I and Leichia spontaneously made a Guts Pose.[38]

plack! plack!

Our head were immediately hit by a harisen.[39] The one who had done it was Hakuya.

「Both of you please stop doing this foolish thing, since the talks can't continue on like this.」(Hakuya) 「『We are sorry(;;)』」(Souma)(Liecia)

We gave an earnest apology. By the way, that harisen was something that I gave to Hakuya when he assumed the prime minister's position. 『When my conduct becomes intolerable, don't hesitate to strike my head with this.』 One way or another, the intention was for the formal Hakuya to calm down with a snappy joke, but, as expected of the unparalleled genius in all of the history of Elfrieden (according to Marcus), he used the harisen splendidly.

「...How do you feel being a retainer who hits the head of the king in such a dignified way?」(Souma) 「My heart is pained by this, however this is also the “King's Decree”」(Hakuya) Hakuya replied nonchalantly. I am delighted to be able to see his honest side, otherwise I would regret it if he had turned into a strict overseer... I was worried about this.

「Putting those matters aside, Your Majesty. Could you care to enlighten everyone as to the purpose of this meeting?」(Hakuya) 「Ah. That's

right...Poncho](Souma)

「Y-Yes!」(Poncho)

Perhaps because he was called so suddenly, the plump Poncho knocked over his chair when he stood up. His round body was the same as ever, but looked different from the way it looked at the audience several days ago; his body was completely tanned dark. There was a reason for this: recently, he literally flew around the whole world.[40]

「Have you prepared what I had requested from you earlier?」(Souma)

「Y-Yes! Thanks to Your Majesty's cooperation, the places that I needed to spend 20 years to visit, were able to be visited in just several days.」

(Poncho) 「...What do you mean?」(Liecia)

Liecia looked puzzled.

「I lent "Air Force 1"[41] to him for the transportation.」(Souma)

「Aerfos...What?」(Liecia)

「Royal Family has flying dragon right? I lent that to him.」(Souma)

It was the Royal flying dragon that the king uses when travelling abroad. Due to the army's prohibitions, there were no other flying dragons, just the one. Because rapid transportation was necessary for Poncho's errand, I lent it to him. There were objections about lending the Royal Family's exclusive flying dragon to a mere commoner. However, since it couldn't be substituted with one of the flying dragons belong to the Air Force led by one of the Three Lords, Castor Balgas[42]; they were forced to accept this decision. By now, it will be futile to oppose my loan and request. Really... They are standing in my way.

「...It would be great if they were destroyed. Three Lords' territory that is.」(Souma) 「D-Don't say something so rash!」(Liecia)

「Even if I'm thinking about this seriously?」(Souma)

Liecia let out a gasp when she saw my expression. I wondered what kind of face I was making right now. Even Poncho and Tomoe-chan became frightened by it. Maybe this is not the right occasion to speak about this.

[43]

「Well then, Poncho, can you please show us what you have gathered?」
(Souma) 「Y-Yes! These are what Your Majesty requested 『The Ingredients not used in This Country's Cuisine』!」(Poncho) Poncho said it while taking out the big bag with great haste. Yes, I made use of Poncho's plethora of food knowledge and appointed him to search for foodstuffs.

Seeing that bag, Liecia opened her eyes wide in disbelief.

「Isn't that the Royal Family's treasured possession the 『Hero's Bag of Holdings』?!」(Liecia) 「Ah. I can store a lot of things without changing their appearance, that's why this bag is convenient for storing foodstuffs since they won't go bad. Since I thought that it was useful for collecting foodstuffs, I lent it to him.」(Souma) 「That's why.... Argh, whatever!」
(Liecia)

Well, since the milk had been spilt, Liecia gave up and dropped her shoulders.

「So what are these? The ingredients not used in this country's cuisine?」
(Liecia) 「More accurately, these are 『Food that are eaten only in another country or in a locality in our country and are not a particularly popular cuisine on this country』」(Souma) Different places have different goods, so different people also have different tastes.

Something that is not eaten and thrown away in one place could be considered as a delicacy in other places. This is a story that I hear often. Even in Japan, there are some localities that made us surprised. 「Eh? That sort of thing could be eaten?!」: That is what the Ken*n Show on TV had taught me.[44]

「Right now, our country is changing from planting cash crops, such as cotton, tea and tobacco, to planting food crops. However we will only get results during autumn. To guarantee that the citizens right now don't get starve, we need an immediate effective measure.」(Souma) A long term earnest reform was necessary to fundamentally resolve the food problem. However, in the meantime there might be people suffering from starvation and they were in danger of starving to death if it went on too

long. Furthermore, the ones who would perish first will be the ones with meager vitality. That is, infants who require a large amount of nutrition. Children are the treasure of a nation. A country that couldn't protect its own children would have no future. However, even if we delivered the nutrition to infants inside of Elfieden, there will be some part of the land that can't be reached by the country's aid. That's why while we are executing our long term plan, we also need a short term immediate effective measure.

「Those are the ingredients not usually eaten?」(Liecia)

「Food that is eaten in another country but not usually eaten in this country: If we incorporate that food into the cuisine, it will be harder for the people to starve, since we would have simply increased the availability of food.」(Souma) 「Does something that convenient actually exists?」(Liecia)

「That's why we need to make sure of it.... Then, let us move on from this place.」(Souma) 「Move? Where?」(Liecia)

I smiled at the confused Liecia and said.

「We will need to examine whether or not we could use the food, so the place we should go to of course will be the dining room, right?」

*

Author note (digested version, since I'm too lazy to translate everything): The author realized that Souma's cheat that should be only useful for paperwork, can actually also used in an OP way like funnels (Gundam reference), but the author decide to against using it in such way. So no One-Man-Many-Doll-Army Souma.

*

[1] エルフリーデン : Erufuriiden

[2] ゼルリン: Zerurin

[3] リーシア : Riishia. This name reminds me of someone, but I forgot who.

[4] 複数同時並列思考 : Fukusuu Douji Heiretsu Shikou.

[5] 念動能力: Nendou Nouryoku

[6] 弱念動能力: Jaku Nendou Nouryoku

[7] アイーシャ: Aiisha.

[8] ルドウイン: Rudowin

[9] ハクヤ: Hakuya.

[10] 殿 Dono: A very formal polite way to refer someone. Mainly used in official letters and or situation. Actually means Feudal Lord / Master.

[11] ジュナ: Juna. This is like a Korean name. Larvyde transliterate this name as Gyna.

[12] Remember that it was the Personal Union between the Kingdom of Scotland and Kingdom of England that gave birth to the British Empire.

[13] This maybe explains one of the reasons for the low birthrate in Japan....

[14] トモエ: Tomoe. ちゃん: Chan. An informal familiar way to refer a child or someone younger.

[15] 母上 Hahaue: A very formal polite name for Mother. It can be also translated as: Honored Mother.

[16] Refers to the period of time that a new mother takes off from work following the birth of her baby. In Indonesia, this is three months and considered as a paid leave.

[17] ムサシ坊やくん: Musashi Bouya-Kun. Bouya means Boy

[18] The certain cat robot is Doraemon. When he took out tools from his 4 dimensional pocket, there will be a BGM playing and he will say the tool's name.

[19] Yurukyara: Almost every city, company or etc in Japan has their own Mascot Character, just like how every university in USA has a character mascot for American Football or something....

[20] Deformed: A Japanese term for a character with unrealistic

proportion; mostly 1:2 or 1:3, the so called chibified character with a large head. Like Gundam SD (1:2) [21] This means that the mascot's height is two times the head height.

[22] Benkei is famous in Japan for being an epitome of loyalty and honor.

[23] 数珠: Juzu or Buddhist prayer beads. Just like the rosary used by Catholics.

[24] Gap: a Japanese concept of a character that had an unexpected side that is different from what they usually shown to others, related to Japanese concept of Honne and Tatemae, like a girl who is really taciturn, composed, and always glaring at MC, but actually really shy and likes cute things. Just.... expose yourself to some Japanese popular media....

[25] 武蔵 Musashi is also the name for a historical region consisting of Tokyo, Saitama and Kanagawa.

[26] Famous Japanese Swordsman who famous for two sword style

[27] Famous Sumo Wrestler

[28]「スピニングバードキック」, Chun-Li's move from Street Fighter.

[29] 双剣の中級スキル【高速回転斬り】: Souken no Chuukyuu sukiru
【Kousokukaitenkiri】

[30] Standard JRPG Hero party consists of 4 people: one Hero and three comrades that stand side by side a la Final Fantasy or Dragon Quest style. Since Liecia didn't know about it since she was from another world. I previously mistranslated this line. Thanks to the kind anon who pointed this out.

[31] It was『人形遣い』 (ningyoutsukai)、『絡繰り使い』 (Karakuritsukai)、『くぐつ師』 (Kugutsushi). Same Job different name.

[32]『時代の変革を導く者』: Jidai no henkaku o michibikusha.

[33] セリナ: Serina. San. A formal polite way to refer someone.

[34] マルクス : Marukusu. Either it Marx or Marks, or Marcus.

[35] ポンチョ=イシヅカ Poncho Ishidzuka. His name come from Ishizuka Hidehiko, one of the most famous gourmet celebrity shows in Japan: Ishi-chan's "Extraordinary" Gourmet Show [36] Picture-perfect, adjective: lacking in defects or flaws; ideal.

[37] Upturned eyes are considered to be cute in Japan.

[38] A victory pose popularized by famous athlete, Guts Ishimatsu.

[39] Harisen is a paper fan commonly used in Japanese slapstick comedy. Umm... this is another world right? I now picture Hakuya carrying a harisen like Zhuge Liang carrying a fan.

[40] This is a pun in Japanese: 世界中を飛び回らせた Sekaijuu o tobimawaraseta. Could be a figurative way to say: "Circling the whole world." Or "Traveling the whole world" like "80 days around the world". The pun was Tobi literally means Fly.

[41] A nickname or moniker for the personal plane of President of the USA [42] カストール=バルガス Kasutooru Barugasu

[43] Beware the nice one. Maybe his face expression is just like Hinata Fuyuki in Keroro Gunso when he mad. Too bad we won't see is army of dolls (funnels) decimating the Three Lords' army.

[44] Nope. I don't know what kind this TV Program is... Any reader know? It start with Ken and end with n, and the genre is documentary or reality show I guess.

Chapter 3: The King's Brunch B

Souma's Perspective

「Hey Souma. I know we need to use the dining hall, but...」(Liecia)

「What?」(Souma)

「Isn't the number of people present is too low?」(Liecia)

Like how Liecia pointed out, the dining hall was currently filled with a hustle and bustle unlike how I usually had.

It was a dining hall that was used for the people who worked inside the castle such as the Royal Guards, the chamberlains / chambermaids and even the previous king, so there's no problem for a large amount of people to eat at the same time since it was furnished with 30 long tables. However, currently, except for a single long table, every other table had been set aside to create a vast empty space. Despite this, the actual freed amount of space was only the area in the vicinity of the long table since the rest of the area was fully either packed with people or machinery parts.

Among others, a large crystal that reached to the ceiling was taking up the most space.

「You want to use the 『Royal Broadcast』[1] again?」(Liecia)

「I feel that it would be wasteful to use this convenient method only to read war proclamations. I intend to use this routinely from now on.」
(Souma) Since it was something similar to “Television”, modern people would realize the power of Mass Media (for better or worse). It can dispatch important information to the citizens quickly and it can also secure the citizens' support via entertainment program broadcasts. The weaknesses of this method was the fact that there were no recording tools, so it must always be a live broadcast; also the image only can be seen in the city (the villages can only hear the audio). But that was something that we would need to wait for until the technology (magic?) progresses far enough to solve this someday in the future.

By the way, I was thinking to start the entertainment program by holding the 「Singing Contest」 first. Since Juna-san had already been acknowledged as the winner at the previous talented people gathering by defeating numerous other participants, this 「Singing Contest」 can be considered as the debut of an idol or a singer that can secure the citizens' support. By the way, I couldn't produce idol groups. Right now, there was a need to constantly conduct live broadcasts, so I thought that it was better for everyone to make their debuts individually by setting a rotation schedule.[2]

Elfrieden's first public broadcasting program... The dream keeps on expanding.



History Textbook

Later on, Souma established the EBC (Elfrieden Broadcasting Company) [3] department inside the castle to conduct public broadcasting program using the Royal Broadcast system. The contents were mainly news and popular song programs, but occasionally there were cooking programs or comedy programs broadcasted in it. This concept that hadn't been thought up by anyone until then was greatly loved by the citizens. However, after hundreds of years had passed, each household had their own miniaturized broadcast receiver and the Royal Broadcast system was mass produced until it was possible to start commercial broadcasting companies, causing the presence of the EBC to diminish over time. However, it was not something to be lamented over, even if the EBC public broadcasting was deemed to be antiquated and outdated with viewers claiming 「Even if it is gone there, won't be any difference」 or 「Only old people watch it」, but this also served as proof that the world had truly become peaceful.[4]



Souma's perspective

「What are you grinning about? It giving me the creeps, you know?」
(Liecia) Liecia stared with cold eyes at the sight of me counting the

chicken before the eggs hatched[5].

... I couldn't possibly say that "it's nothing", right?

「Anyway, since this time, the objective is to make cuisine that normally isn't eaten in this country. So isn't it more efficient if we also publicize it to the citizens at the same time? For that reason, we especially invited all the beautiful girls to this place.」(Souma) 「You mean Juna-san?」(Liecia)

「That also includes Liecia-san. And also Aisha-san and Tomoe-chan. After all, they said that the ABCs of successful programming are Animal, Beauty and Child.[6] The traditional beauty: Liecia, the healthy tanned beauty: Aisha, the beauty with the charm of both adults and females: Juna, and the wolf-ear animal beauty and child: Tomoe-chan. Because all of the outstandingly talented beauties are here, then we can easily capture the citizens' attention, don't you agree?」(Souma) 「I-I... am also included....」(Liecia)

Liecia's face became flushed red. The other three were replying one after the other.

「It will be my honor, Your Majesty.」(Juna)

「Wha-! If that is my Lord expects from me, then I will devote myself to fulfill it!」(Aisha) 「Hawawa[7], but, I will do my best!」(Tomoe)

They were showing their eagerness. Meanwhile, since Hakuya promptly advanced the preparations for the broadcast, Poncho was reconfirming the ingredients in a hurry. Looking at this, it seemed that the cards in my hand had also been enhanced. Naturally, you can never have too many talented people.[8]

I then faced everyone and gave out a command.

「Then let's start and go "On Air".」(Souma)



Narrator

That day, all the cities in the Elfrieden Kingdom were packed full of people.

“It seems that the Hero-King who had previously gathered all the talented people in the country, plans to use the Royal Broadcast for something.” It had become the talk of the townsfolk, so they were crowding in the fountain plaza (the water fountain in the plaza of a city had been equipped with a device to spray mist into the air so that it will be able to project the images from the Royal Broadcast). The villagers that only could hear the audio also deliberately swarmed to the nearest city to be able to see the images, too, so the number of people who had gathered was enormously large.

After all, the entertainment on this world was only to the extent of gambling at a bar, so ever since the public broadcast several days ago, this was now recognized by the citizens as a new form of entertainment. If people gather, so will money; if spectators gather, so will merchants. Each square in every city was packed with stalls, giving off a feeling of a large festival. Everyone spread out mats or sheets on the ground and sat down, impatiently waiting for the broadcast to start.

「Um-um... Mama, wat wil ‘appen?」(Random Girl)

「That’s right. I wonder what will happen?」(Random Mother)

A young girl with restless eyes asked her mother who answered with a smile.

「Everyone ‘ere look so ‘appy. The age surely ‘ad changed, right?」
(Random Old Man A) 「Yer right. In our time, it was impossible to think that we could enjoy the Royal Broadcast.」(Random Old Man B) In the olden times, the Royal Broadcast was only used to declare war on other countries or to announce that “The Army will release proclamations about the war progress” (in other words, the army’s announcement). The elderly people, who remembered the time of the kings in the distant past, would only silently close their eyes. During that age, this country’s dominion had increased in twice its size, however its population, by contrast, decreased to nearly half.

The only words that came out from Royal Broadcast were 「We won XX Battle!」 or 「It’s necessarily for us to keep fighting to surpass XX’s

honorable death!」, and other similar war propaganda. When the people of that age heard the Royal Broadcast, what they imagined in their head was the word 「Death」.

「I pray that this new king will not cause the young'uns to hold such terrible images

『Waa!』(Loud Cheering) The small voice of the old man was drowned out by the erupting clamor.

The Third Royal Broadcast in Souma's reign had commenced.



Narrator

The projection showed a man and a woman wearing a full dress and uniform.

『Good day to everyone in Elfrieden!』(Juna)

『Go-Good day』(Poncho)

『This is the information program from Elfrieden's Royal Castle: 「The King's Brilliant Lunch」, shortened to 「The King's Brunch」[9]. The host is me, Juna Dohma![10]』(Juna) 『Po-Poncho Ishizuka Panacotta[11] wi-will report, yes!』(Poncho)

『...Poncho-san, don't be too nervous for no reason!』(Juna)

『T-This is not for no reason, I am not familiar with this... Juno-dono is really impressive. I'm envious, yes.』(Poncho) 『It is because I need to be able sing well in front of the guests. In case the viewers visit the singing café 「Lorelei」 in Parnam, please treat me well.』(Juna) 『Please don't insert such conspicuous advertisement!』(Poncho)

Ahahahahahaha!

A playful beautiful woman and a hasty plump man were really in contrast with each other. The people by the fountains were tempted to laugh.

『Well then, let us begin the explanation of this program's objective.』

(Juna) 『T-The Fourteenth (Temporary) King of Elfrieden, His Highness Souma Kazuya, yes!』(Poncho) “Ooooooooo” the plaza became noisy.

On the projection was the image of the young king they saw at the time of talent gathering.

『Since I haven't been crowned yet there is no need to refer me as a King... Ha, Greetings everyone. This is the current acting King, Souma Kazuya[12]. Now I want you to hear about the current state of this country...』(Souma) “He doesn't look like a King”, spoke someone in the crowd. It couldn't be helped since he was just appointed for it. Without knowing about this, Souma began his explanation in front of the board with the chart and diagram of the current nation's state of affairs. He especially elaborated about the root of the food shortage.

『... in this manner, the current conditions caused by high demand for fresh produce, the root cause of the food shortage issue this time was because the farmers changed from planting food crops to cash crops like cotton. Of course, this is not the fault of the farmers alone, but also the merchants who compelled them to sell these crops, the military who gained profits from it, and finally the royal family who overlooked this situation. I ask you all for forgiveness for this.』(Souma) After saying this, Souma bowed his head. A king bowing his head towards his subjects was something that had never happened before. Even this situation was something that wasn't something directly caused by Souma's reign.

『As of now, our country will change from planting cash crops to food crops, however this will only bear result in autumn. We had also considered importing food from other countries. However, this situation is unfavorable. The first reason is because we will stop exporting our chief export, which is cotton, we also won't be able to acquire foreign currency. The second reason because every other country has the same food situation as our country. You can't give something that you don't have.』(Souma) The King's speech's contents was enough to discourage the citizens. However, the citizens were more surprised rather than dejected since the King was making this information available to the public. Usually a superior won't disclose any information he had towards his

subordinate, since that information might include his own blunder. There is also awareness that the subjects wouldn't understand national politics in the first place. Actually, even if the contents of the current king's explanation could be comprehended by Japanese elementary school children, only 30% of Elfrieden's citizens would be able to understand it.

However, this young king released the information to the public. The people belonged to the educated class were quite surprised. Why would he do something like exposing his own mistakes if it could lead him to lose his authority over the citizens?

『U-Um.... Is that something that was supposed to be mentioned to the citizens?』(Poncho) Poncho timidly asked as though he became the proxy of the citizen's voice.

However, Souma didn't change his expression.

『Because a person who keep secret wills be doubted. If the people will doubt whether the next information I release will be a lie or not, I would rather use my own head than to follow a lie. Although there are some I need to conceal for diplomatic reasons, but for domestic affairs, my policy was to disclose it from now on. I want my citizens to use their head. What should this country do? Is my policy correct? I want everyone to think about it together with me.』(Souma) ◇ ◇ ◇

「This is the first time that there was a King like this...」(Random Citizen) Muttered someone. A monarch that wanted his citizens to also think about politics was something unprecedented. Even if there was a 『National Assembly』[13] to represent the citizens' will, frankly, it was just 「an Assembly for the citizens to decide what to say to appeal o the King」. Whether or not it would be adopted was depended entirely on the King's decision, so the contents of their appeals were also only to the extent of 「Requesting a price correction on the inflated XXX」 or 「Appeal for public works」. Its function was just like a comment box for the government and not a place to discuss actual political decisions.

In the first place, even now such a feudalistic system was still deeply rooted in this country. Or to put it in simpler words, this country's

political system was basically 『The person below will pay 「Taxes」 to the person above and the person above will guarantee the lives and properties of the person below.』 The citizens would pay taxes to the feudal lords, and the feudal lords would guarantee the lives and properties of the citizens. The feudal lords (nobles) would pay taxes (scutage) to the Kingdom - in lieu of their obligation to provide military services - and the King would guarantee their lives and properties (guaranteeing lives not only meant protection from foreign enemies but also providing public works such as improving infrastructures and the like).

A complete stratified society. Although there was a risk that if the top rots then everything else will rot, but if you think about it from other side, except for the ruler, there is no need for the citizens to think about politics, so it can be called a carefree political system where the citizens only need to think about themselves.

However this young King wished for the citizens to use their heads. “I want everyone to think about it together with me” so he said. It was a moment of the birth of new rights and obligations among the common citizen: public participation in politics. Of course, it doesn't mean that the path was being exemplified. Moreover, even if that privilege was given right now, because of the low education levels amongst the citizens, clearly it would just fall into an ochlocracy.[14]

However, the seeds had surely been scattered.

「Changes will be happening in this country from now on.....」 (Random Old Man A) 「I envy the young generation who will witness this change.」 (Random Old Man B) 「What are you saying, we will also keep on going.」 (Random Old Man A)

While looking at the young king's figure, the old men were smiling brightly.



Without knowing that he had made a small ripple, Souma continued his explanation.

『We can only wait until autumn until this problem is completely solved

in this way. Of course, we will also give our aid, however it will be hard to give it to every citizen in this country, due to the amount of resources or the geographical terrain. After all, not everybody lives on level plains.』
(Souma) After all, this country was a nation where various races had gathered.

In the forests were the elves, at the steep cliffs were the dragonewts, in the underground caves were the dwarves, on the coastline were the mermen, along with other races who lived in places where the supply line didn't cross. These people wouldn't be able to receive the aids, just like the people who lived in the rural villages deep inside the mountain range.

『That's why I request my citizens, or rather, this is a decree』(Souma)

Souma cut his speech at this point.

After drawing a breath, he clearly declared.

『Until the Autumn, you must all survive.』(Souma)

The citizens' breaths were taken away by the words that the young King had spoken.

Their meaning was simple. However, their true intention couldn't be inferred.

『Because we don't have enough hands as it is, it is essential for each of you to move in order to survive. Go to the mountains, go to the rivers, go to the sea. Search for food, come together and cooperate. Even if you had to bow to someone or smear yourself with disgrace. Until the autumn comes, I appeal to everyone in here to survive.』(Souma) It could be said as a resignation of duty. Therefore it was as if he said 'do your best' to the suffering people. However, it was also a truth that someone wouldn't be able to help themselves if they also didn't do their best.

The young King sincerely apologized.

『I beg of you, everyone. Because it had the meaning of not ruining another person's life, it might be difficult. However I want everyone to welcome the fruit of the autumn without attacking or stealing from another person, without giving up the children to reduce the number of

mouths to feed, without abandoning the elderly, without even a single family member missing. That's why this broadcast was planned so that it might help even if it only a little.』(Souma) Souma raised his face and started explaining the purpose of the current broadcast. In order to buy time until the food problem is resolved, this broadcast would introduce the ingredients that were not usually used in this country's cuisine and demonstrate how to cook it. Those ingredients were ingredients that could be obtained cheaply (as they grew naturally in the wild). And now, to show that those ingredients at this place could really be eaten, the ingredient would be turned into a cuisine and be examined.

Even the citizens who were indignant because of Souma's previous statement of duty renunciation, after hearing the contents of Souma's explanation, that anger had melted away. 'This King is really thinking about us', they could actually feel his true intent.

『.....with that being said, Poncho and Juna-dono, I entrust you two to continue hosting from here on out.』(Souma) Finishing his rough explanation, Souma sat back on his seat.

Souma didn't know this, but at that time in the kingdom's plazas, applause could be heard. Souma's words left a deep impression on the citizens who received it, so they spontaneously applauded him. Without Souma being aware of it, he already acknowledged by them as their King.

On the projection were Juna and Poncho who took over once again as the hosts.

『Well then, let us quickly begin. Poncho-san, what is the first ingredient?』(Juna) 『Y-Yes! The first ingredients is, THIS!』(Poncho)

Souma's perspective

Then Poncho took out a cloth covered box. Then Liecia, Aisha, Tomoe, and I lined up and sat like guest commentators before the table with the box on top of it. It was a large box similar to fish tank. Then Poncho took off the cloth.



At the dining hall of Elfrieden Caste in Capital City of Palnam that had been changed to a live recording studio.

「Uuuu...」(Aisha)

「Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!」(Tomoe)

「Wha-What!?!」(Liecia)

When they saw what was atop of the table, Aisha, Tomoe and Liecia, were all screaming in three different ways while backing off from the table. On the contrary, only Juna-san and I were calm.

What was inside the box in front of me was,

「It's an octopus.」(Souma)

「So, it's an octopus.」(Juna)

A creature with soft body and eight wriggling tentacle, it was something I already knew of:『Octopus』. Even though the cow or pig were fantastically distorted and had a turtle-like shell, this was just a (somewhat larger) normal looking octopus. Well, even in fantasy worlds, something like a 『Giant Octopus』 was something that usually came out. I thought “How should I judge it with fantasy standards?”.

Ah, by the way, in this country, 『OctopusTako』 was called 『Okato』, so I thought that it sounds similar to Octopus. But because of the Hero's language translation ability, I simpl heard it as 『Octopus』 instead. If the ingredients that would come out after this were things that resemble ingredients from Earth, I might just use their Earth name to refer to them.

「Eh? This country doesn't eat octopus?」(Souma)

「How could you eat a disgusting thing like this?」(Liecia)

Liecia looked at me with discerning eyes as if I had told her something unbelievable.

No-no-no, it's only an octopus, you know? I couldn't understand her.

「Well, since its appearance is like this, it's only eaten in certain coastal areas. We even eat it in my hometown.」(Juna) Juna gently gave her

explanation. Well even in Earth, there are European countries (except for Spain and others[15]) where octopus is called “Devilfish” and didn’t consider it as food, so it was inevitable if it also happened here..... right?

「But it’s delicious.」(Souma)

「Is that so?[16]」(Aisha)

I threw out the word “Delicious” and Aisha immediately bit at it. I know that food tasting was part of her bodyguard duty, but this girl was unexpectedly quite a gourmand. It wasn’t that she was a glutton, but she was extremely fond of delicious foods, especially sweets, (high class confectionaries presented to and distributed to the King or the maids), which she ate in such a large quantity that it made all the maids jealous 「How could she eat so many things but still be able to maintain such body proportion...」. I was guessing that perhaps it was because she was raised in the middle of the forest, so she rarely ate sweet foods.

「Aah. I know that some people are picky about eating raw food, but if you just rub it with brine and lightly boil it in water, it is quite delicious, you know. Stewing it, grilling it, or cooking it with rice are also delicious options.」(Souma) 「...」(Aisha)

「Aisha. You’re drooling, you’re drooling.」(Souma)

「U!ps!... sollee...」(Aisha)

「Good grief. Also, it’s high in protein while low in calories so it’s also good for dieting.」(Souma) 「H-Hearing that, makes me a bit curious...」(Lecia)

I threw out the word “Diet” and this time it was Lecia who bit at it. No-no-no, I thought that Lecia should put up on some weight, you know? Since she was in the army, she was already quite slender.

「But, I don’t think you should really care about it...」(Souma)

「Souma... The time we lose interest in our weight is when we stopped being girls.」(Lecia) With those words, Lecia admonished me with faraway look expression on her face. Since Juna-dono and Tomoe-chan also nodded strongly, then I guessed it must have been the truth. But,

Aisha was the only one with an expression of 「even so, I want to eat all the meals」.....

「That's right... then, should we see how it will be cooked?」(Souma)

After we moved to the kitchen attached to the dining hall, the octopus started to be cooked. Although the cook in the castle said, 「If you ask us, we will gladly do it...」, but since I like cooking, I did the cooking instead. First I put the octopus in a large bowl, and then with a kitchen knife, I removed the beak, organs, ink sac and eyeballs (at this time the female group yelled 「Uwaa...」 but I ignored it). Then I rub the surface with salt until the slippery texture solidified before I rinsed it with water. In case the suction pads still had some mud in it, I carefully cleaned it.

And then I put the legs in a pot of boiling water and boiled that octopus shaped creature (it's still an octopus though). After seeing the dirty yellow color had properly turned into violet-red color[17], I then brought it out and with that, I had splendidly finished “Boiled Octopus”. [18] After letting it cool for a bit, I took one full length of the legs into my mouth. Ah even like this, it was delicious.

「Eat while they're hot! [19]」(Souma)

「Wha-!？」(Liecia)

Liecia and the others were surprised at the sight of me beginning to eat without any hesitations. Based on the feeling from chomping down a piece, yes, without any doubt, this was the taste of octopus. The slightly salty taste from it was delicious. But it was only delicious; it was regrettable that this world still didn't have any soy sauce!

「...Can it really be eaten?」(Liecia)

「What are you talking about, Liecia? You just need to test it, right?」
(Souma) 「No, that is... my heart is still not ready....」(Liecia)

「Is that so? But this is delicious, you see.」(Juna)

Giving the hesitating Liecia a sidelong glance, Juna also chewed down a piece.

「Ah! That's sneaky Juna-dono! Then it's my turn!」(Aisha)

Seeing that, Aisha also started eating it... But, Hey! Don't munch the entire head! How much a glutton can you be? Really this Dark Elf!

「Whoa! This firmness is quite delicious!」(Aisha)



「...that so?」(Souma)

...Yes, I need to pull myself together. I started cutting a large octopus and covered the pieces with wheat flour, egg and breadcrumbs. Then I skewered them with 3 pieces per skewer and threw the skewers in a saucepan full of hot oil. I deep fried them until their coating had turned crispy and golden-brown colored. Then I pulled them from the pan, and added the finishing touches with a mayonnaise sauce I had created: a

mixture of this world's thick sauce, egg yolk and vinegar. Finally, it was completed.

「『Fried Skewered Octopus』... or something like that. Well, feel free to eat it.」(Souma) I gave everyone one skewer each.

Liecia and Tomoe-chan nervously put them into their mouths. However, at the moment it reached their mouths.

「!? What is this? Delicious!」(Liecia)

「This is really... really delicious!」(Tomoe)

Their eyes were wide open because of the deliciousness. Alright! I made a guts pose[20] inside my mind.

「This is really delicious. Contained by the crispiness of the coat was the amazing succulence of the octopus.」(Juna) 「T-True! I never had realized before that octopus would go very well with the sauce!」(Poncho) 「This white sauce and the octopus suitably amalgamated together. It is a magnificent work, Your Majesty.」(Juna) 「Yes, so Your Majesty can also cook! It's surprising! Yes!」(Poncho)

Juna-san and Poncho were speaking words resembling those of a gourmet reporter. Those two were eating the octopus and thoroughly savoring the taste. By the way, Aisha was, chompchomp*munch*munch*...

With frightful speed, she emptied the mass produced skewers.... Yes, let's just leave her alone.



「... Hey Papa?」(Random child)

「Yes. If it's about the octopus, today we also caught a lot of them in the net.」(Random Father) 「Really!? I want to eat it!」(Random child)

「Yer right. We always threw them away, but let us try eating it.」(Random Father) In coastal villages, such conversation was prevalent.



Umm... I have no other comment other than, “Is this Shokugeki no Souma?” Now I want to eat some octopuses. Open the fridge There is no octopuses but there are some squids. close enough.

[Editor Note: Personally I like baby octopus. Munching on the legs & head after eating it whole is great! The suction cups have a wonderful texture like pork tongue lol.]

*

[1]『玉音放送』 Gyokuon Housou. “Gyokuon” means King/Emperor voice and Housou means “broadcast”. Have any better suggestion? [Editor: Maybe Royal because he’s not Emperor yet, just King.] Agreed.

[2] Like AKB48. With their numerous subgroups where the “center” is rotated every now and then.

[3]「E・H・K(エルフリーデン放送協会)」 Erufuriiden Housou Kyoukai. Parody of NHK (Nippon Housou Kyoukai). So I translated it as a parody of BBC (British Broadcasting Company) the mother of a lot of public broadcasting in the world. [Editor: That is hilarious, I love it.]

[4] Well... In some country public broadcasting is not that popular. [Editor: Public broadcasting is popular in some countries? 88888]

[5] A proverb meaning: You should not count on something before it happens. You should not expect all of your hopes to be fulfilled. The original is 捕らぬ狸 or catching Tanuki, a shorthand form of (捕らぬ狸の皮算用 counting money before catching a tanuki).

[6] Souma just say the truth... ABC is important... (so that explain why series with Kemonomimi, Loli and plain old Bishoujo is easy to become popular) [7] Flustered reaction. Awawawawa... Just like High Elf Aze from Death March.

[8] This is the principles of Cao Cao that Souma emulate. Cao Cao focused close attention on recruiting talented people to strengthen the power of his group. He even composed his famous poem : 短歌行. Where he uttered his desire for more talented people. Really, Cao Cao is an otaku for talented people.

[9] TITLE DROP. So that what the brunch means. I always thought it was “breakfast+lunch”

[10] ドーマ = (Dooma) = Dohma. Actually I just copy pasted the Romanization from Darkstalker 3.

[11] I just realized, Pana Cotta is an Italian pudding like dessert.

[12] Finally, his name is : 相馬 一也, Souma Kazuya, it's funny since everyone treat his surname as his given name. Absolutely no relation with the other Souma (Souma Yukihiro 創真 行平).

[13] Kokumingikai 国民議会. A compound word of Kokumin: Citizen and Gikai: Congress/Assembly/Parliament.

[14] Mobocracy or Ochlocracy or the Mob Rule Bitches! It doesn't have any relation to Mafia Rules. Famous modern example: People's Power in Philippines, the Velvet Revolution, 1998 Reformation Movement in Indonesia, and Arab Springs. The downside of this was: Tyranny by majority, populist move that may destructive in long run, and or post-action politic squabble.

[15] Spaniards will eat anything! Joke aside, octopus weren't really commonly eaten in European countries in the middle ages aside from some Iberian and Mediterranean communities. Maybe because they resemble a baby Cthulhu. [Editor Note: So it is all the Bible/HP Lovecraft's fault that people starved lol.] FUNFACT: Other than Japan, Spain is the second highest country with octopus devourer.

[16] Every time I see Sounanoka, I need to restraint myself from turning it into Touhou jokes.

[17] Fun fact the color came from carotenoid pigment released when the protein that usually carrying it denaturized from the heat.

[18] The octopus actually only “boiled” for less than 5 minutes

[19] I really want to turn this into Happy Eating!

[20] Guts pose, a pose of victory commonly seen in Japan.

Chapter 3: The King's Brunch C

Souma's Perspective

「The next ingredient is this!」(Poncho)

After we finished with eating my popular 『Fried Skewered Octopus』, we returned to our seat where Poncho opened the prepared box with new ingredient in front of us. After seeing the long cylindrical ingredient with brown color and covered in soil inside the box, 「Is this... “a root?”」(Liecia)

「Root, or so what I think...」(Juna)

「It don't look delicious..... can this really be eaten?」(Tomoe)

Question mark was floating atop Liecia, Juna-san and Tomoe-chan head. On the other hand, 「So, it's burdock[1]?」(Souma)

「It's burdock, alright.」(Aisha)

I didn't get surprised that only Aisha and I know that it was burdock. Well, since in western country, burdock cuisine was categorized as unconventional food, so it wasn't something unusual, but what surprised me was that the western style dark elf Aisha knew about it. So to speak, 「If we don't eat everything that could be eaten in the forest, we would quickly get nutritional deficiency.」(Aisha) Aisha said it with a distant look on her eyes. That place's food situation might be the cause for this hungry dark elf. But I don't have any interest in that.

「If it is being introduced, then that means that it is edible, right?」(Liecia) I nodded to Liecia who was asking for confirmation.

「It can be eaten, you know. You can enjoy its taste as it is or you can cook it together with sauce so that the sauce can permeate inside and then you can enjoy its texture. It's mostly composed of dietary fiber that can't be digested, so that means it can become a stomach medicine because it can stimulate bowel movement. It's a helpful ally for people with constipation.」(Souma) 「... Please don't mention bowel movement or constipation while we are in the middle of eating.」(Liecia) 「Since it make

waste products easier to come out, of course it is also good for health and beauty.」(Souma) 「Uu... s-so when you said it like that, it's quite fascinating....」(Liecia)

Well then, since we had confuted[2] Liecia, let's start tasting the food.

This time was quite simple. First, after scrapping off the mud covered skin with a kitchen knife, the burdock was cut into long thin pieces before being covered in potato starch, and then thrown into the pot with the oil that I previously used. After they properly fried, they were taken out and divided into two portions, one portion was sprinkled with a pinch of salt and another one was sprinkled with a pinch of sugar, and finally, the 『Burdock Chips (potato chip and rusk[3] style)』 was completed. Everyone took a bite and gave their reaction, 「Awa, its crunchiness is delicious.」 (Liecia)

「This is... indeed a suitable partner for drinking beer.」(Poncho)

Liecia and Poncho who consumed the salty portions were munching them like they were in a snack bar.

「When it's being chewed, the escaping oil began to dissolve the sugar, so that the sweet taste spread out in a rush inside the mouth.」(Juna) 「I want both of my mothers to taste this.」(Tomoe)

Juna-san and Tomoe-chan were tasting the sugary portions and gave out a gourmet like comment and a completely childish comment respectively. ...By the way Aisha was, 「If you eat both of them at the same time, the sweet taste is deliciously crunchy!」(Aisha) ...greedily devouring both portions. ...Yes, I also didn't have anything to say this time.



The next edible ingredients,『Red Bear's Paw』, 『Sword Tiger's Liver』, and 『Grilled Salamander』came out, but I stopped their introductions. Certainly, they were ingredients that didn't usually get eaten in this country, but I didn't want ingredients that only could be acquired by adventurers. If by some chance the citizens could get their hands on it then I hope they could eat them without wasting it, just for the citizens to know this was enough. As expected, I also didn't know the recipe for how

to cook the bear's paw.

Ah, by the way, when we were selecting ingredients, we excluded the poisonous ingredients like 「Pufferfish」 or 「Mushroom」. I know that it was edible with proper cooking method, but it was obvious that if starving amateurs get their hands on them, then it could end disastrously. Well, even that poisonous part could be eaten. In Ishikawa Prefecture, there is 『Pickled Pufferfish Ovary』[4], even the Nagano Prefecture there is an area that famous for eating fly agaric poisonous mushroom[5].....A human's appetite is amazing, right?

Let's return back to the story and see the next ingredients. However, it was something that made us completely dumbfounded.

「The next ingredients is this, yes!」(Poncho)

「「「「「 T-This is...」」」」」(Everyone)

This time everyone's eyes popped out.

Inside the box that Poncho opened was a bluish-green jiggly object.

「This is... Zelring[6], right?」(Souma)

It was 『Zelring』: the jelly-like slime soft-bodied creature that inhabited the surrounding fields in this area. Even its appearance and ecology was giving off the similar feeling of the small fries in RPGs. Its trait was, generally speaking, their weakness. If you cut it, it died. If you smash it, it died. It lives by sticking on other creatures (or otherwise their corpses) and absorbing nutrients from them and there is no gender as they multiplied by self division.

It gave impressions of a unicellular amoeba-like organism transformed into a larger size.

Eh? You could eat it? It is edible?

「Wait a minute! This Zelring is dead right?」(Aisha)

Aisha noticed something out of place.

「Yes. This Zelring is already dead.」(Poncho)

「No-no-no, that's strange you know? This is the first time I have ever seen a dead Zelring!」(Aisha) 「Ah, that's right. Now that you mention it, it's indeed strange.」(Liecia)

Liecia also noticed something and had the same opinion. But I didn't see anything strange at all...

「So what you mean-dattebayo?[7]」(Souma)

「What with that tone... Zelrings are weak you know? If you cut its thin surface membrane with a blade, its bodily fluid will swoosh come pouring out. If you hit it with a club, it will go splat and have the same result. Afterwards, what remains is bluish-green puddle of liquid.」(Liecia) 「Is that true?」(Souma)

「Yes. That's why "leaving a good corpse behind" is something unbelievable.」(Liecia) Aisha also nodded at those words. I see, Aisha was a warrior while Liecia was a soldier, so they both had experience in battling Zelrings so they were able to perceive it as being out of place.

「So, then how could this Zelring end up in this state?」(Souma)

「There is a little secret behind it. I was taught by a faraway small western tribe, that by attacking the Zelring using a thin rod to destroy their core without breaking the surface membrane, after it dies, the body will remain intact. This is called 『Freshly killed Zelring』 by the locals.」(Poncho) Freshly killed, huh? I wonder if it was like freshly killed fish..... but oh well, I see. As expected, it seemed that I was wrong to judge it as large unicellular organism.

「And then if some time has passed after we destroyed the core, its body fluids will lose its liquidity and gradually solidify.」(Poncho) 「Something like rigor mortis, huh?」(Souma)

「Yes. In addition, if we just leave it as it is, the body fluids will evaporate and it becomes a dried food. After it has been dead for about two hours, the body will become solid to some extent and during this time, it's possible to use it for cooking. That is the current state of this Zelring, yes」(Poncho) Umm... I understand that it could be used for cooking but the question is : Is it possible to eat it?

Afterwards, Poncho retrieved a kitchen knife and began to cut the Zelring on its length.

「When Zelring is in this state, you can cut it longitudinally with kitchen knife without destroying the body. Since the tissue fibers of the Zelring run along its body longitudinally, this method will preserve its texture better, yes.」(Poncho) Poncho skillfully cut the Zelring into thin long pieces like he was making Ika Soumen[8]. After that, Poncho threw them into a pot of boiling water.

「Then we add a little salt to the boiling water and boil it until it hardens.」(Poncho) Hm. It somehow resembled genuine soba or udon. It was boiled and became a brilliantly blue-green colored noodle that resembled Cha Soba[9]. Then, Poncho steadily put desiccated mushrooms and something like kombu[10] into the boiling pot. Is he trying to make dashi[11] from it? So he was making something like Nabeyakiudon[12]... Finally he seasoned it with more salt to raise the flavor, and served it in soup bowls.

「Here you are. The 『Zelring Udon』.」(Poncho)

「So it really is an udon!」(Souma)

「I-Is something wrong, Your Highness?」(Poncho)

「Ah, no, it's nothing.」(Souma)

Ah that's right, the language of this country was translated into Japanese in my ears. So perhaps it was something else and I heard it translated as "Udon". How confusing.

Well, let's just leave this matter behind; in front of my eyes was Kansai-style (green) udon in transparent soup.[13]

(Translator notes: Hoo... Boy... These 4 lines is a parody of Japanese CMs... I hope I get the right products reference) Red Fox and Green Zelring♪[14]

The wind makes a speech 『This is a food?』[15]

Oh Zelring udon. So there is something like this.[16]

Delicious udon, Zelring-chan♪, Jealous?[17]

I'm just escaping from reality huh? Eemm, is this really a meal?

I looked at my surroundings and everyone had a face of 「Go ahead, eat it」. However there was no one who raised their hand and said 「Then, I'll start eating」!

... Well since even Liecia and group had eaten something they had never eaten before.

It's not fair if only I escape alone! Now, time to eat!!!!

slurp

「!?」(Souma)

「S-So, how is it, Souma?」(Liecia)

I heard Liecia's worried voice, so I,

「...This is unexpectedly good.」(Souma)

Replied like that. Yes. What was this? This was completely different from what I imagined. I had imagined that it would have that fishy smell and be flaccid like ika soumen, but it had a slurpable chewiness and didn't smell fishy at all. Rather than udon, this was similar to a pot of "kuzukiri"[18] or "Ma*ny"[19]. Only when I chewed at it somehow, there was a peculiar squeaky texture. Was this the fiber? This was my verdict: 「Appearance: Udon, Taste: Kuzukiri, Texture: Kyushu's regional cuisine Okyuuto[20]」

Yes, this wasn't bad. This wasn't bad at all.

「It's true...This is unexpectedly good!」(Liecia)

「The soup is carrying its deliciousness well.」(Juna-san)

「This is really from that Zelring? It's suprising.」(Tomoe-chan)

「*sluuuuuuuuuuuuuuurp*」(Aisha)

The people who ate after me also gave out favorable impressions. Well, after all, it was delicious. It was nonsense to question whether this udon or plain udon was more delicious. Just like, udon and soba, whichever one

was more delicious depend on someone's tastes. This too, had its own charm.

「By the way, how about the nutritional content?」(Souma)

「Nutritional content..... That is to say, I don't know, however it may be similar to gells taken from animal bone.」(Poncho) 「Collagen, huh?」(Souma)

So the Zelring possessed both the protein contained in animal bones and a plant's dietary fiber. More and more, I didn't know whether Zelring should be considered as an animal or a plant.

「In any case, I don't hat think there is a problem in their nutritional content. Since Zelrings can be found almost everywhere, if they can be eaten, then it can reduce the food shortage, don't you agree?」(Souma) 「That's true. Zelrings are also easy to farm. Even with their feed being mere kitchen scraps, they will easily multiply.」(Liecia) 「...No, let's not give them strange things to eat. If they ingest toxic substances, when that Zelring is eaten, it can cause food poisoning.」(Souma) 「T-That's true, right」(Liecia)

「For now, let's do some experimental Zelring farming. Hunting them in the wild is also a valid choice, but it will be bad if it decreased their numbers too much and disturb the ecosystem...」(Souma) 「I think that is a correct decision.」(Liecia)

Apart from that, Zelring Udon was very delicious.



「Can you really eat it?」(Citizen A)

「But, the King and others are deliciously eating it.」(Citizen B)

「I will go to Adventurer Guild and put out a quest for Zelring's capture.」(Citizen A) 「Ah, then I will also do the same」(Citizen B)

Such conversation seems to have been unfolding in every fountain plaza.

『Elfrieden's signature dish are Zelring Dishes』

But at this time, who could have predicted that this line would speak the truth of the far future?



「Then let's introduce the next ingredients. The cooked dish has been prepared already.」(Poncho) As Poncho said this, he opened the box; we then see the thing inside the box.

「「「「Ewww...」」」」(Other)

Everyone leaked out that voice from their mouth. Well, since what inside it was a “bug”. Nevertheless this dish, was a dish from the world... no Japan where I lived before.

「This is Locust[21] Tsukudani[22], right?」(Souma)

「Yes. This is called『Giant Locust Tsukudani』」(Poncho)

「Ah...Yes, certainly it's big.」(Souma)

The locust in the Japan's tsukudani was normally just the size of a cricket (Though, why I compared the size of an insect with another insect?) but this locust was as big as a kuruma prawn[23]. That color gave the feeling of a sweet and salty taste, so let's test their inside taste...Hm? Tsukudani?

「This is tsukudani...」(Souma)

「Eh? Souma, you going to eat it?」(Lecia)

Lecia was looking at me with a surprised expression when I suddenly stabbed my fork at the giant locust. Certainly, normally someone would hesitate to eat it just by its appearance. Rather than eating it calmly, they would eat it more timidly. However, currently, I didn't let myself bothered by this. After all I, absolutely need to ascertain this!

chomp, munch munch...

「!？」(Souma)

「Ho-How is it, Souma?」(Lecia)

The texture was like shrimp with its shell intact. However, more

important than that.

This is...No doubt about it!

「This Tsukudani... uses Shouyu!」

「Souyuu?」(Liecia)

Shouyu. Soy sauce. The center of Japanese taste. If there is no this, sashimi or cooked food would be useless! Ramen, hamburgers, spaghetti, and other foreign cuisines would be turned into “Japanese Food” by this magical condiment! Perhaps I have been yearning for this taste ever since I came to this country! Since making fermented food is difficult, I reproduced mayonnaise, but even so, its flavor couldn’t rival this illusionary condiment! But on today’s dish, it was there in front of my eyes. Even if it was just a locust, but it looked like the ultimate dish for me.

「Eh? No way, Souma is cying?」(Liecia)

「How could I not cry? This is... The taste from my hometown.」(Souma)

「The taste from Souma’s hometown...」(Liecia)

「Does Souma-niisama’s hometown also have Locust Tsukudani?」
(Tomoe)

I saw at Tomoe-chan who was deliciously crunching the locust tsukudani. That reminds me, when everyone was backing off, only this girl didn’t show any surprised expression...

「Perhaps this dish is...」(Souma)

「Yes. I often ate it in the Mystic Wolf Tribe’s village.」(Tomoe)

「Then, the Mystic Wolf Tribe can make shouyu!?」(Souma)

「Shooyuu...Is it maybe “Salted paste water”[24]?」(Tomoe)

「Salted paste water?」(Souma)

「Salted paste water is a condiment preferred by the Mystic Wolf Tribe, yes.」(Poncho) Then, from the side, Poncho gave additional information.

「Originally, the Mystic Wolf Tribe pickled beans in salt and fermented

it into “salted bean paste”[25] for condiment use. This process also generated a liquid on top that is taken out and then cured into “salted paste water”. Both condiments have a peculiar taste that can’t be found in this country.](Poncho) Yes. I was convinced by this explanation. After all I had read on some books that shouyu was born as a byproduct of miso production. In other words “salted bean paste” is miso, while “salted paste water” is shouyu (the reason why I didn’t heard it as “miso” and “shouyu” was probably because it wasn’t similar with modern “shouyu”).

Perhaps the Mystic Wolf Tribe’s cuisine was quite close to Japanese.....
Hmm, wait a minute.

「Hey Tomoe-chan. This tsukudani is also made with sake right?」
(Souma)

「Ah, yes. Sake that was made from a plant seed called Eni seed.」
(Tomoe)

「What kind of seed is that?」(Souma)

「Umm... It’s a plant that grows in wetland, its ears have broom like tips that contained a lot of seeds that are similar to wheat grain.」(Tomoe)
Without any doubt, it was rice! The hope of the future!

For the plan to replace planting cash crops into food crops, I had thought to cultivate rice (wet field) that didn’t lose in fertility to wheat (dry field), however this country didn’t have the essential rice seeds so this plan underwent a setback. So that’s it, it grew wildly in the north, huh? Of course, I must send orders to cultivate it. At any rate, the Mystic Wolf Tribe... shouyu, miso and also rice; this tribe held many things that I desired.

.....

「Alright, I have decided! The refugees from the Mystic Wolf Tribe will be granted a part of area in Parnam.」(Souma) 「Uee!?」(Tomoe)

「Accordingly, I want them to produce that salted bean paste and salted paste water. Since by planting a lot of soy beans, it’s possible to restore the land’s fertility[26].」(Souma) 「Wait, Souma, are you serious!?」(Lecia)

Liecia was flustered, but be it as it may, I was completely serious.

「Shouyu and miso... With salted paste water and salted bean paste, I can reproduce my country's cuisine. Since it seems that there is also rice, don't you want to eat tasty things that this world never seen?」(Souma)
「Th-That is...」(Liecia)

「Yes! I want to eat it all!」(Aisha)

Aisha vigorously raised her hand. This girl was really honest to her stomach.

「... Well not only Aisha, but I also thought that the citizens would also like to eat it. Then, should I release the recipes to the public so that they could personally make it after collecting the ingredients? Or perhaps they could open a shop using that cooking?

Either way, I believe it would greatly stimulate the economy」(Souma)

If the economy has high liquidity, then it will enrich this country. This is what I believe.[27]

That's why I said this toward the citizens who were watching the broadcast.

「Only by through talented administration, we could continue to exist. So, I will use that talent even if it comes from refugees. I don't have any reason not to accept a tribe that has excellent food processing technology. That's right... For the next five years, I will grant monopoly rights for the production of salted bean paste and salted paste water to the Mystic Wolf Tribe. If there is any other production, then it will be cracked down as illicit production. However, after five years has passed, then I will lift the ban on salted bean paste and salted paste water and it will be turned into a free market, so I encourage the Mystic Wolf Tribe to solidly make their business foundation during this period of five years. That is all.」(Souma) ◇ ◇ ◇

Historical textbook

After this proclamation, a section in the Capital City of Parnam was constructed as a residential area for the Mystic Wolf Tribe. Upon

receiving the country's support, they built factories that manufactured "Salted Bean Paste" and "Salted Paste Water". In this world, there were many cases where the residential area given to the refugees turned into slums. This was because the refugees had limited economic activity (either they were unemployed or they were exploited as cheap labor, and other similar scenarios), so they often ended up struggling in poverty. However, in the case of Mystic Wolf Tribe, due to the monopoly rights bestowed to them by the King on "Salted Bean Paste" and "Salted Paste Water", they were able to build business foundation and their residential area did not become another slum zone. After five years passed and the monopoly rights ended, the beastmen of this tribe completely assimilated and became part of the capital city's citizen population. Even after the products, "Salted Bean Paste" and "Salted Paste Water" had their name changed to 『Miso』 and 『Shouyu』 and their monopoly rights were rescinded, the Mystic Wolf Tribe kept devoting themselves to manufacturing these specialty products. And so, the Miso and Shouyu that was produced by the Mystic Wolf Tribe with the 『Wolf』 hexagonal logo and that was sold under the 『Kikkourou[28]』 brandname was loved by the citizens for many years to come.



Narrator

In the fountain plaza, a rhythmical BGM and the gentle voice of Juna Dohma could be heard.

『Well, the broadcasting time of this program 『The King's Brunch』 is soon reaching the time to say farewell. What do you think about becoming a host, Poncho-san?』(Juna) 『Y-Yes. I'm glad that my knowledge could be useful for the citizens even if it is only a little. However, I think that becoming a host was too heavy for me. I hope someone will replace me next time.』(Poncho) 『Let's see, will there be another next time? What do you think, Your Majesty?』(Juna) 『That depends on the citizens' request.』(Souma)

『So, I see. If there is a demand then it will be good. Right, Poncho-san?』(Juna) 『I-I personally don't have any demand for it, yes!』(Poncho)

『Don't say it like that, let's do this again next time~ ♪』(Juna)

『Hiiii! Please leave me from that!』

『Thank you very much for watching and listening up until this point. The program is brought to you by me, Juna Dohma and』(Juna) 『Poncho Ishizuka Panacotta as the host. Yes!』(Poncho)

『Well then everyone. Gokigen'you[29]』(Juna)

When the BGM ceased to play, the image also vanished. Apparently, the program had ended.

When the broadcasting ended, sighs could be heard from every fountain plaza.

「Ah... So it has finished?」(Citizen C)

「It's unexpectedly interesting. I want to see it more」(Citizen D)

「You're right. Even if it isn't daily, but I hope it will at least be broadcasted periodically.」(Citizen C) 「But if there is a request for it, then it will performed again right? Then what about trying to submit the request for it in the National Assembly?」(Citizen D) 「Ooh! There's that option. Then let's discuss this with the mayor.」(Citizen C) Such conversations occurred in every city.

After all, the entertainment in this country was only limited to gambling in bars. The citizens were presented with a 『Variety Show』 (Although Souma was just wanted to provide an 『Informational Program』 about the food problems, but there was Juna and Poncho's banter, a section similar to cooking program, and scenes of beauties going “Kyaaa” whenever they tasted the strange food so this result was inevitable) with contents that provided new forms of entertainment right in front of their eyes. Of course they would be excited. Actually, several days later, the National Assembly submitted a 『Letter of Appeal about Holding a Periodical Royal Broadcast』to the King. Souma, who after accepting it, then established the new Elfrieden Royal Broadcast every evening.

Well, there were also people who had different viewpoints from the society's viewpoint.

「When I first heard that the new king was enthroned suddenly, I was suspicious that it was an usurpation. However, that young king was unexpectedly a friendly person.」(Old Man A) 「That's true. I kinda understand the reason King Albert abdicated」(Old Man B)

「The Princess also looked very lively. I doubt that her engagement was against her will.」(Old Man A) 「Their attitudes are so relaxed ith each other. Their relationship must also be very good.」(Old Man B) 「Hohoho, then in the next year a successor might be born.」(Old Man A)

「The child from the wise and kind King and the gallant princess, huh? I can't wait to enjoy the coming age.」(Old Man B) 「You're right. Hohoho」(Old Man A)

The elderly were quietly laughing together.

“Wise and kind king”... That was their evaluation for Souma.

However, that evaluation was only half-correct.

Souma definitely wasn't a “kind king”.[30]



「Give me the report on the neighboring countries' state of affairs!」
(Souma)

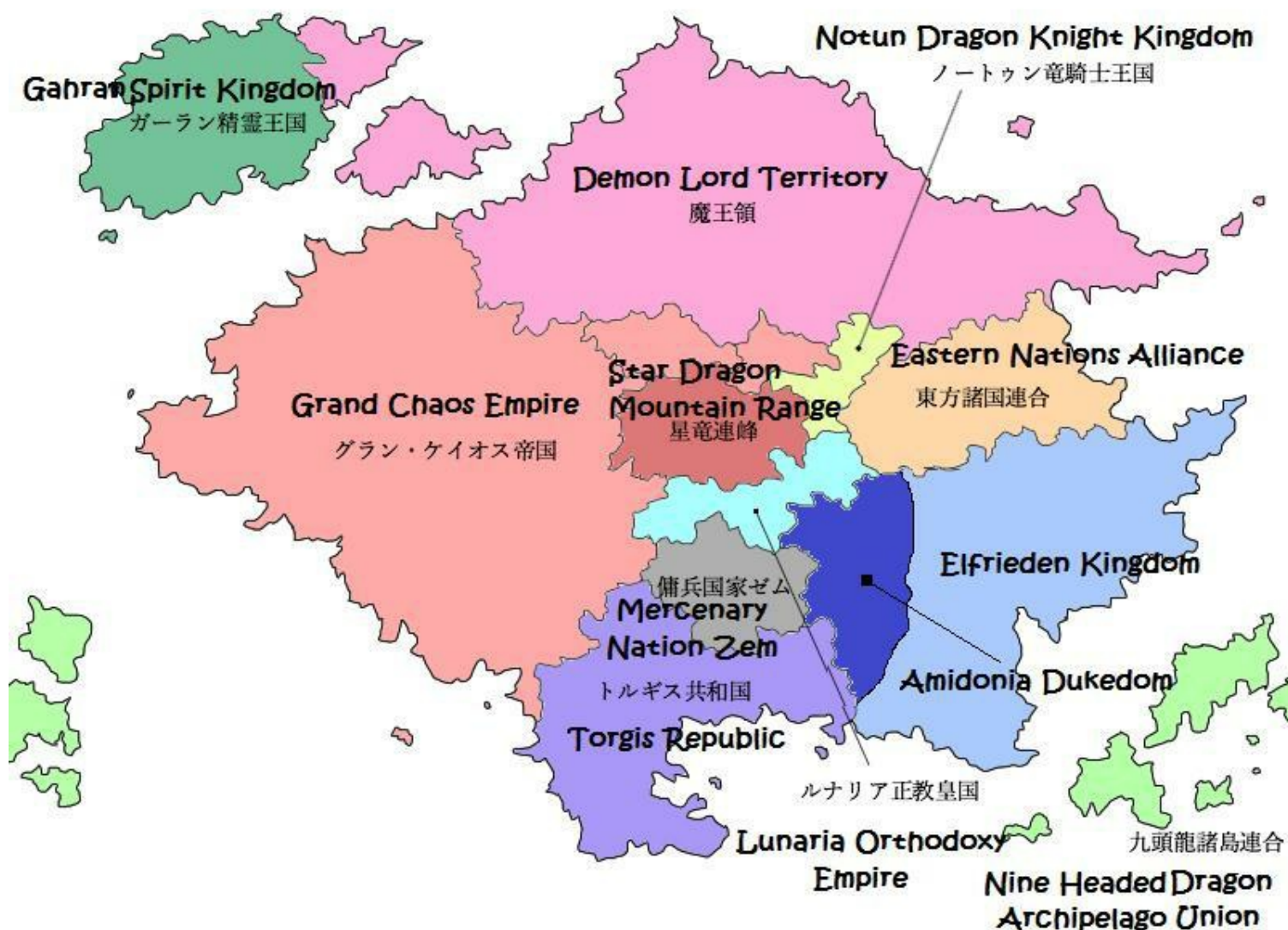
King's Government Affairs Room: I was sitting on my personal seat and inquired to Hakuya who was standing at the other side of the table.[31]

The voice was cold. The gaze was chilly. It was an atmosphere that couldn't be imagined to be the same personality at the cooking program several hours ago. After all, in this place there only Hakuya and I were around. At this time, Liecia and the others might be excited and celebrating the success of the Royal Broadcast. Aisha, who called herself my bodyguard and always inseparable from my side, was nailed down by the prepared feast.

After we left our seats at that party temporarily, we conducted a private talk in this government affairs room.

Hakuya was also unperturbed by the atmosphere I emitted, and

stretched out the map of this world on top of the table.



「I will begin the report. First is reviewing the surrounding countries: our country is located on the southeastern region of the Continent, the adjacent countries are in the north: the 『Eastern Nations Alliance』[32], in the west: the 『Amidonia Dukedom』[33], and in the southwest: the 『Torgis Republic』[34]; make up these three nations. The other neighboring countries are the island nation of the 『Nine Headed Dragon Archipelago Union』[35] in the east beyond the ocean and the mercenary nation of 『Zem』[36] further west from he Amidonia Dukedom. From those countries, the number of countries that are friendly to us is 0, neutral to us are 4, and 1 country that is hostile to us.」(Hakuya) 「So, it seems we are really friendless, huh?」(Souma)

「With all due respect, I think it is an understandable situation as it is currently a turbulent period where the threat of Demon Lord Army is imminent. At present, every country is suspicious to each other, and the only nations that are considered friendly are those that are a 『Suzerain

state』[37] or a 『Vassal state』[38].』(Hakuya) 「Can you even call that friendship?』(Souma)

「If there is no need to worry about betrayal, then it can be considered as friendly, I think.』(Hakuya) This prime minister said something preposterous so nonchalantly. Doesn't that mean that calling a relationship of 'domination▪subjugation' where one side can be used until it is broken without being able to voice a complaint is considered 'friendship'? It's just like the alliance between the Oda House and the Matsudaira House when Oda Nobunaga was still alive.[39]

「Then, is the hostile one Amidonia? Or Zem?』(Souma)

「It's not Zem. Certainly they had bad impressions about "those matters", however it's not to the point of hostility. Of course, if the Amidonia Dukedom is openly hostile with us and appealed for reinforcement, they would only dispatch mercenaries.』(Hakuya)

「Amidonia, huh?... If I remember correctly, they had sent an "offer of assistance" to us, right?』(Souma) 「Yes. They have said that『because as a neighboring country, Elfrieden's national stability is directly connected to our country's national defense, if we are called to help pacify the Three Dukes, then we will send reinforcement.』』(Hakuya) 「Hahaha... They are so easy to understand.』(Souma)

It was very obvious that they were aiming to enlarge their territory by taking advantage of the friction between my side and the Three Dukes.

「But you know, I think they also said the same thing to the Three Dukes' side.』(Souma) 「Like 『Let us overthrow the sham king Souma who usurped the throne together』. It is something not to be laughed at.』(Hakuya) Well, even the Three Dukes would notice Amidonia's ulterior motives. Since I wasn't an unlikable king, they wouldn't be able to swarm this country without any resistance. Of course, even Amidonia understands this, so in other words...

「If both side gave them an appeal for support, then they could move their army here, giving the appearance of a just cause.』(Souma) 「They would seize control of the western cities while sending their army to

reinforce the “winning side”. And then, one way or another, they will give a reason to gain total control of the city and effectively assert it as their own country’s territory.](Hakuya) 「An orthodox tactic, however it is effective」(Souma)

Well, there were many examples in the history of the previous world. Houjou Sou’un[40] 「Borrow the road for hunting to seize the castle[41].」 Perhaps only a gullible person could not see through these simple tactics. Amidonia, who brims with deceit, Zem, which began to show hostile tendencies, and lastly the antagonism from the Three Dukes that knocked Elfrieden’s national unity out of balance. Oh my, isn’t this situation completely hopeless?

「However be it, as it may, what about the scenario that you had drawn?」(Souma) I stared stoically at Hakuya. However Hakuya didn’t get perturbed for even for little bit and spoke out.

「Yes. For the time being the situation has completely changed into our favor.」(Hakuya) Seeing that calm appearance, I roughly scratched my head.

「You... Know about it, right?」(Souma)

The policy that Hakuya adopted would result in several victims.

The scenario that Hakuya had drawn would incur great losses towards the enemy and grant great benefits to our allies. There was no doubt that this method was necessary for this country to emerge as a strong power. Nevertheless, for this scenario to be drawn, it was necessary for this country to shed blood. The meat would be cut and the bone would be severed, but that meat was the citizens. For this scenario, how many people would be sacrificed?

However Hakuya spoke out without a hint of timidity.

「Yes. The one who could seize this opportunity should seize it.」
(Hakuya)

「...」(Souma)

「Supposedly, Your Majesty has also understood. That if this method

came to fruition, it would also save many citizens.」(Hakuya) 「... I know about it. However, you see, I can only permit “this” once.」(Souma) I stared at Hakuya’s eyes and honestly replied.

「In my world, there was a political thinker called Machiavelli that said the me thing in 『De Principatibus[42]』. He said that the characteristic of a wise ruler was that as a ruler after “this” had completely finished, there will be no second “this”. On the contrary if he decided to repeat “this” many times over, then sooner or later he would have become a tyrant and met his ruin.[43]」(Souma) 「...that Machiavelli-dono looks like a person with a surprisingly realistic[44] way of thinking.」(Hakuya) Hakuya seems to be slightly interested. Ah. Since, it was something he liked. Machiavelli, in all respects, had a greatly realistic way of thinking, so I had read 『De Principatibus』 numerous times.

...But I never thought that the day when this knowledge could be useful would arrive.

「Anyway, I give my consent for your “that” policy. That’s why...」
(Souma)

「...」(Hakuya)

「Since the die has been cast, deal a killing blow.」(Souma)



Author Note:

I never decided that Souma is a kind king.

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Oh my god... The footnotes is multiplying!

Now for a quick glance on the general noodle term that appeared in this chapter:

Soba is a noodle made from buckwheat and wheat flour.

Udon is thick white noodle made from wheat flour.

Soumen is very thin white noodle made from wheat flour.

[1] The original Japanese is Gobou or Greter Burdock or *Arctium lappa* or niubang or lappa.

[2] Yes this is a real word. Confute is a verb that means: prove (a person or an assertion) to be wrong. And now you now.

[3] Rusk: a light, dry biscuit or piece of twice-baked bread, especially one prepared for use as baby food.

[4] In case you don't know. Pufferfish's ovaries are very poisonous.

[5] Fly Agaric Mushroom (*Amanita muscaria*) is poisonous, although it's somewhat edible, just prepare your life when you eat one. I mean it's a freaking red mushroom! And if you fail biology class, RED means WARNING. And no... you won't become bigger after eating this.

[6] Changing Zelrin into Zelring, because it reminding me of Poring-type enemies (Ragnarok Online Mob).

[7] Souma goes dattebayo in here.

[8] Ika somen (イカそうめん, 烏賊素麺, ikasoumen, "squid noodles") refer to a type of sashimi made from raw squid cut into fine strips, vaguely resembling somen type noodles. Ika Musume worst nightmare.

[9] Cha Soba noodles are soba noodles made from buckwheat and wheat flour with the added ingredient of fresh green tea leaves. It's really green.

[10] Kombu (昆布, konbu) is a species edible kelp from the family Laminariaceae and is widely eaten in East Asia. It is used in making Japanese dashi or soup stock.

[11] Dashi (出汁): Japanese's stock made from fish and kelp, used in Japanese cooking. Dashi forms the base for miso soup, clear broth, noodle broth, and many kinds of simmering liquid.

[12] Nabeyaki Udon (鍋焼きうどん) is a hot udon noodle soup traditionally served in individual donabe (earthenware pot) or iron pots. Besides udon noodles, the soup usually includes chicken, kamaboko (fish cake),

mushrooms, and vegetables.

[13] Kansai style Udon tends to have transparent clear soup, while Kanto style Udon tends to have darker soup. Remember this. This will come out on the next test.

[14] This line is a parody of Maru-chan brand of Cup Ramen: Akai Kitsune (red fox) and Midori Tanuki (green tanuki), Souma butchers the tanuki and replaced it with Zelring. See the CM here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgROi4YwB-Q>

[15] This line is a parody of line from the Juumangokumanju CM: 「風が語りかけます」「うまい、うますぎる」 The wind makes a speech: Delicious, truly delicious! See the CM: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dppGFudPFUs> (the product package is censored) [16] A line from a CM about Suntory Natural Water brand: 「奥大山の天然水、そういうのもあるのか」 “Natural water of ‘Mount Daisen’s Interior’ (奥大山 is the name of the brand), So there is something like this. See the CM: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hnmwgy9IgrQ> Mount Daisen is in Tottori Prefecture.

[17] Ummm... I give up on this... I don’t know from what CM this come from... The original line: うまかおうどん、ゼルリンちゃん♪ しっとーや？. Even my Japanese meme knowledge didn’t help me at all in this.

[18] Kuzukiri are a kind of noodle made from Kudzu root starch. I’ll add the food picture later [19] I think it’s Malony-brand noodle... Especially referring to their famous harusame noodles cellophane noodle Chinese glass noodle. Famous for their chewiness, in my editor’s words: [Editor’s note: I fucking love cellophane noodles. So chewy.]

[20] Okyuuto is a noodle made from seaweed originating from Hakata prefecture that soon spread out to Fukuoka City and then all of Kyuushu.

[21] Inago : Locust of either genus Oxya or family Catantopidae that is can be find on rice fields. Fun fact, the Roman word for locust and lobster is the same: Locusta.

[22] 佃煮 Tsukudani: a method of cooking where ingredient is boiled with Shouyu and sugar. Tsukudani means Village-Field style, since this originated in rural regions. Shouyu is Japanese style soy sauce. Expect no

other substitution.

[23] Kuruma prawn or shrimp or Japanese tiger prawn or *Marsupenaeus japonicus*. (average size 12-15 cm).

[24] Hishiomizu 醬醃水 literally mean: Salted Soy Paste Water. Shouyu is 醤油. See the similarity on the first kanji?

[25] Mamebishio 豆醬醃 literally mean: Salted Bean Paste.

[26] In case someone forget biology class. Legumes have rhizomes in their root where multitudes of symbiotic bacteria help the plant gather fixed nitrogen from the air. Plants need a lot of nitrogen, so nitrogen is one of the main components of soil fertility. Before the advent of cheap explosive material... errr, I mean cheap synthetic nitrogen fertilizer, one of the quickest ways to increase nitrogen amount in the field is by planting legumes and then to use it as green fertilizer after harvesting. This method is also very useful for organic farming or for poor farmers in third country or for land reclamation post intensive farming. And don't get me started on biochar and land carbon-based reclamation. [Editor notes: For American readers, George Carver & his peanut plants. Also clover fields with bees~.]

[27] Don't understand this? Read some Keynesian economy books.

[28] 亀甲狼 (キッコウロウ) Kikkourou. Literally means: Turtle Wolf. A Parody of Kikkoman 亀甲万, the most popular brand of shouyu in Japan.

[29] A very formal Japanese catch'em'all greeting and farewell phrase. Just go read Reika-sama from the Wordpress of Estellion Sharlulu Asheel Vinchance Celenalia di Effalufiluu'luufilafaafee (the 35th). [Editor's note: Onii-chan!!! Kyaaa~]

[30] Souma is indeed wise, but he wasn't kind. So the elderly were only half-correct.

[31] Please imagine Souma is sitting in a Gendou Ikari pose. Steepling his hand.

[32] 東方諸国連合 Touhou Shokoku Rengou. Can means Eastern Nations Alliance or Allied Eastern Nations. The Nations can be

substituted to Countries or States. I choose ENA, since it's sounds like a girl's name. (*Spoiler*: They are not 'that' united, hence the Alliance/Allied) [33] アミドニア公国 Amidonia Koukoku: Can means Amidonia Dukedom or Dukedom of Amidonia. The Dukedom can be substituted with Duchy or Principality.

[34] トルギス共和国 Torugisu Kyouwakoku: Can either means Torgis Republic or Commonwealth. Subject to change if the raw say otherwise.

[35] 九頭龍諸島連合 Kuzuryuu Shotou Rengou. Nine Headed Dragon Archipelago Union. Why Union? Since spoiler they are more united than ENA. Also I found NHDAU acronym funny although UNHDA is also funny. Kuzuryuu is a famous Japan's myth and folklore.

[36] 傭兵国家ゼム Youhei Kokka Zemu: Mercenary Nation Zem. Nation can be substituted with Country or State. Just like Swiss that was famous for their mercenary regiments.

[37] Suzerain state: A dominant nation controls the foreign policy and international relations of a subservient state while allowing the subservient nation to have internal autonomy.

[38] Vassal state: A state that is subordinate to another and would have to provide military power to the dominant state [39] After defeating Imagawa House in the Battle of Okehazama, Oda Nobunaga subdued the Matsudaira House, which was previously allied to the Imagawa House, to become his ally/subordinate. Later, the Matsudaira House became the Tokugawa House. Seriously, play some Sengoku games or read some Sengoku manga.

[40] Houjou Sou'un 北条早雲. A Japanese Sengoku warlord (1432-1519), the founder of modern/late Houjou clan. A Sengoku otaku must know him to be quite crafty as he was able to build his basis of power in Kanto region.

[41] RL example: Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia using Sudetenland as casus belli and then incorporateing it.

[42] Translated as "About Principalities" with Principalities means "ruler". It is more commonly known as The Prince in English speaking

world.

[43] Read “The Prince” Chapter 6-8 for spoiler... You have been warned

[44] Pragmatic and realistic is Genjitsuteki in Japanese.

Interlude 1: The Adventures of Musashiboy

AN: When I imagine Soma making a doll go on adventures, this scene comes to mind. I'm repenting now. Yes, this has almost nothing to do with the main story.

*

In the Elfrieden Royal Capital Parnam's latest urban legend there is something called

[The Adventurer in a Plush Suit]

They say the adventurer wears a 1.5 meter tall plush costume. They hunt with a halberd carried on their back. They had a short and stout body but their movements are very agile and their skills are also top notch. They don't seem to have a fixed party and take on monster subjugation quests solo but sometimes when there are adventurer teams looking for temporary party members to go on a dungeon capture, they would participate and delve the dungeon together.

By the way, they were registered with the Adventurers' Guild under the name [Musashiboy-kun], a bonafide adventurer. Since there are lots of eyewitnesses and there's no mistake that he 'exists', he gradually turned from being called an [urban legend] to a [story of an eccentric].



"Umm... so you're the adventurer who wants to be our temporary party member?"

In front of the request bulletin board in the Adventurers' Guild.

The male swordsman of a 4-person adventurer party (consisting of the swordsman, a male priest, a female thief and a female mage) was dubiously asking a short and stout plushie. The plushie had a halberd in his hand, a woven box on his back, and white silk covering his face (it's actually sewn on), the acorn eyes and thick eyebrows peeking from behind the silk looked very charming. Who's that? Is it a snowman? Is it a tumble doll? No! It's Musashiboy-kun!

[..... (Musashiboy-kun says “that’s right!” with a hand sign)]

“Ah, so might you be the adventurer they’ve been talking about lately...”

[..... (Musashiboy-kun nodded energetically)]

“I, I see...”

“Oi oi, we are in a hurry because we needed a vanguard but is this thing really okay?”

The slit-eyed female thief said with malice. The friendly-looking male priest calmed her down.

“W, well, the rumors say he’s a proper adventurer even though he looks like he’s fooling around, so I think he’ll be fine. We’re going to a rather easy dungeon near the capital today, too....”

“He’s all right, isn’t he~. He’s cute, too~”

The female mage was also fooling around, leaning on to Musashiboy-kun, enjoying his fluffiness. The male swordsman looked at the scene with a wry smile as he offered a hand to Musashiboy-kun.

“Anyway, we’ll be in your care today”

[..... (Musashiboy-kun shook hands)]

“..... could you possibly... can’t talk?”

[..... (Musashiboy-kun nodded energetically)]

“.....”

“Oi oi, you’re sure we’ll be okay, right?”

Nobody answered the female thief’s question.



The adventurer party plus Musashiboy-kun entered a dungeon near the capital. This dungeon is a cavern, in it dwells ferocious gigantic monsters in addition to goblins. What will you do, Musashiboy-kun!

Musashiboy-kun vs Giant Python

Sssssshhhh!!!

[..... (Musashiboy-kun stands before the big snake)]

Sssssssshhhhhh!!!

[.....!? (But Musashiboy-kun was surprised because the big snake ignored him)]

Let me explain. Snakes look for prey by sensing their body heat, it couldn't detect Musashiboy-kun who is only a plush doll.

“Tch, why are you ignoring the plushie and going towards us!”

Waddle waddle waddle, SLASH!

[..... (Musashiboy-kun saved the panicking female thief)]

“T, thanks....”

[..... (Musashiboy-kun gave her a thumbs-up)]

Musashiboy-kun vs Vampire Bat (a whole flock) [..... (Musashiboy-kun mowed down the bats with a [High-speed rotating slash])]

“Oooh, you're quite good aren't you”

[..... (Musashiboy-kun turned to the male swordsman and gave him a thumbs-up)]

“..... hm? Oi, you.....”

[..... (Musashiboy-kun tilted his head, “what is it?”)]

“Your back, there are several bats hanging down from there....”

[!? (“Take them off!” Musashiboy-kun kicked and struggled)]

Let me explain. Musashiboy-kun doesn't have any sense of pain so he doesn't notice he was being bitten.

Musashiboy-kun vs Bottomless Swamp

Sploosh sploosh, sploosh sploosh

[..... (Musashiboy-kun is stuck in a swamp, struggling)]

Sploosh sploosh, sploosh sploosh!

[..... (He is calling to the party members “hurry and save me!”)]

The mage and priest looked at him blankly.

“He totally looks like he’s playing~”

“I know, right”

Sploosh sploosh, sploosh sploosh



Once the dungeon capture was over, the members went about splitting today’s earnings equally. However, no matter how the male swordsman divided the rewards, Musashiboy-kun wouldn’t take it.

“No way, it’s no good to work for free. Please take the reward”

[..... (Musashiboy-kun shook his head)]

“Are you really, really sure you don’t want it?”

[..... (Musashiboy-kun nodded energetically, then...)]

“Ah....”

Waddle waddle waddle....

Musashiboy-kun ran away from the adventurers. Let me explain. The plush doll Musashiboy-kun could absolutely not equip anything besides his initial things (the woven box? just a decoration). The party members watched Musashiboy-kun’s back dumbfoundedly.

“What’s the deal with the guy?”

“Don’t ask me. Actually, is he really a guy to begin with?”

“There might be a fairy inside~”

Musashiboy-kun who leaves mysteries behind. His actual identity might be a fairy, like the mage said.

Today yet another urban legend was born.



The large common bath inside Parnam Castle.

Inside there’s a “Musashiboy-kun doll (large)” being soaked in a large

tub filled with hot water, Soma who's washing the mud off its lower body, and Liecia who's looking at him with cold eyes.

“..... Doesn't it look a bit bigger than before?”

“That one was a prototype. This one's the one I ordered from castle town's artisans based on that”

“! No way, the [Plush Adventurer] the town's been talking about couldn't be...”

“Ah, it's probably this guy. There's nobody inside, though”

“There's that time with the mannequin dolls too, are you trying to turn Parnam into a ghost town!”

“Owowowow.... hey woah!”

Hit with a bucket by Liecia, Soma dived down inside the tub still in his clothes.

Chapter 4: Parnam Vacation Day A

Several weeks had passed since the first [King's Brunch] broadcast.

That day a document was delivered to Elfrieden's Prime Minister Hakuya Kwonmin.

The document was made mainly by the human resources department, but it was also jointly signed by the castle's internal departments including the Royal Guard corps and the household agency. There were also names of the now chamberlain Markus and Royal Guard Knights' Captain Ludwin. Wondering what the matter was, he hurriedly read the contents.

"..... I see"

Hakuya instinctively agreed.



"... which is why we would like the king to take a vacation"

"Though you said 'which is why', I still don't get what's what"

As I was doing some paperwork in the government office, Hakuya came along and suddenly told me to "take a vacation." I then plopped the document I was working on on top of the desk.

"It's a written petition from human resources. They said [if the head doesn't rest the people underneath will find it difficult to take a rest]. This was also signed by Markus-dono and Ludwin-dono. I, too, added my own signature."

Ah... that reminds me, I haven't taken a holiday since I was summoned.

"But it's not like I don't rest at all..."

I've been getting used to [Multiple Parallel Wills] and [Telekinesis] recently so I entrusted the paperwork to telekinesis while my real body works on the "Musashiboy-kun doll" in Liecia's room. By alternating my wills between working and resting I could fight for 24 hours without feeling fatigue.

But since Hakuya's the one mentioning it then it looks like the problem here isn't that.

"But even though you rested you're always in the castle, right?"

"Well, that's just in case anything happens"

"Then allow me to say that that doesn't look like a break at all. Since you don't look like you're resting, everyone is finding it hard to take a rest. Please consider that"

"But, well, even if you say so..."

"Normally I'd want you to take a big chunk of days off for rest but..."

"Do we have the free time for that?"

"We do not"

"You can say that again"

There is practically a big heap of things for us to do. We're at the level of willing to take help from anywhere. There's expansion of armaments, meetings with important people, foreign correspondence, and progress with all sorts of reforms, there's no end to it if I had to mention each and every one. There's also Aisha, who's been imploring me to go to the Dark Elf forest as soon as I possibly can (though I did put up countermeasures through word of mouth). There's no time to waste here in this country that's being pushed to the edge.

I told Hakuya as much, but he shook his head.

"But do consider that it will cause morale to degrade and work efficiency to go down"

"So what are you telling me to do?"

"Please make room for one day off somehow. While you're at it, it might be good to take an outing during that time"

An outing, huh?

"What if I wanted to roll around in my room since I finally got a day off?"

“Rejected. We’d like you to take a vacation where your subordinates can see”

“... can you still call that a vacation?”

I personally think that a vacation is where you can do anything you like, you know?

I sent Hakuya a meaningful glare, but I might as well have been talking to a wall.

“Wouldn’t it be a good opportunity? Why not take this chance and take Princess Liecia around the castle town?”

“You’re telling me to go on a date?”

“You are engaged, after all. Show the people you’re getting along”

“Isn’t that official business then?”

Are you telling us to do something like [Kouoo Album]?

«TN: Koushitsu Album, seems like a TV show about the Imperial Family»

“... and what are you going to do about the escort detail?”

“Don’t you have Aisha-dono?”

“You’re telling me to take a girl along while I’m on a date with another!?”

“A flower in both hands. Most enviable”

“You don’t really mean it do you...”

Haaah... well, since I’m finally getting a vacation and all, let’s make this as some fun between friends. I might as well bring Tomoe-can along, I guess. I could go see the music café Gyna-san runs.

“... fine. I’ll take a vacation”

“Understood. Thank you very much”

I sent a cold gaze to Hakuya who is bowing reverently.



“Now then, I wonder where Liecia’s at?”

I wanted to tell Liecia we have a day off but she’s not in her room. Which means she should be somewhere in the castle’s training grounds. Now that her status as royalty is still in the air because of my enthronement and only the title of officer of the army under Georg Carmine is left to her, she no longer has a job within the castle. She’s only helping me out at most. She was complaining that she doesn’t have anything to do besides joining the Royal Guards for practice, I think.

I went around the shooting range and the indoor practice hall, and finally saw her when I visited the courtyard afterwards.

She was crossing swords with Aisha.

“HAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!”

“.....”

Aisha, loudly screaming a scream filled with fighting spirit, brandishing a sword that was likely to be longer than she was tall.

And in contrast, Liecia was silently seeing through Aisha’s attack, drawing her rapier.

It’s not obvious to the untrained eye which of them is stronger.

Was it Aisha, who could repeatedly deliver blows that’ll seriously injure you if they hit, or was it Liecia, who delivered triple strikes with her rapier, looking for a gap while guarding against those blows, or was it Aisha, who brushed those rapier strikes off with only her gauntlets, or was it Liecia who saw the gap it made and stepped in, not letting Aisha raise her greatsword.... is this really a practice battle?

The armed fight between those two intensified, I don’t know which part is practice and which part is serious.

” [Sonic Wind] !”

” [Ice Sword Mountain] !”

Now they’re beginning to use magic and skills!

Aisha's [Sonic Wind] seems to be one where she makes a slicing wind with her greatsword, after being dodged by Liecia, it cut the tree behind her right in half diagonally. On the other hand, Liecia's [Ice Sword Mountain] instantly froze the ground into an ice-skating rink, and made countless spikes come out of it, Aisha lopped off the spikes that seemed like it was going to pierce her.

..... what's this, a life or death fight?

I've seen magici in this world. I've been playing at being an adventurer using the [Musashiboy-kun doll (large)] recently in order to practice my doll operation, so I've seen the adventurers who delve into dungeons with me use magic. However, the magic used by the adventurers (beginner rank) that go dungeon-delving with me was only to the point of shooting fireballs, hurling ice, and healing simple wounds.

I've never imagined that magic could become this absurd when used by an expert.

Aisha is strong, but Liecia is also considerably powerful. They had a lively look in their eyes from meeting a worthy rival, or rather, they're shining.

This is why military people are... wait, if I let them go on they're going to destroy the castle!

"CUT IT OUT.... BOTH OF YOU!"

" Huh! UWAA!?" "

The two of them returned to their senses and landed, at the same time their feet slipped and they fell on their backsides.

Chapter 4: Parnam Vacation Day B

“A, a date!?”

“Yeah”

I explained to Liecia that I had a day off and that Hakuya recommended that I take this chance to go on a date with her, to which she looked taken aback.

“Is that something you do because somebody else tells you to?”

“I thought so too, but.... in Hakuya’s mind a royal date is official business”

“Such an inhuman line of thought”

“He’d probably say, before I’m a human being I’m a prime minister”

“Ahaha, that’s just like him”

“And he’d probably expect us to be King and Queen before being human beings”

“..... sorry. I can’t laugh to that”

The two of us breathed a sigh. Yes, it’s honestly a pain. Hakuya had a good head on his shoulders and he’s reliable with work, but his overdevotion to his job is the fly in the ointment.

“But I’m glad for the holiday, we can go out somewhere right?”

“Well, we can”

“Yes, yes! Then you simply must go to our forest!”

Aisha raised her hand in appeal, but I shook my head.

“We still have lots of work to do. I can’t take more than a day off”

“Uu.... certainly the Dark Elf forest is three days there and back, but....”

Ah, we can’t do that then.

“Give it up for now. I’ve at least taught you about periodic thinning for now, didn’t I?”

“Yes. But there are extremists among the Dark Elves.... they say ‘why in the world do we, the protectors of the forest, have to cut the forest’s trees’”

Ah, they exist in any world, I guess. People who misunderstand things.

Not realizing that the thought that “people must protect nature” is itself a form of arrogance.

“Which is why the King must go out there and yell at them...”

“..... when I have the time, okay”

“Please. For that reason please use this body, this life, in however way you want”

Aisha said as she bowed.

I feel like I’m only adding to the list of things I have to do, but.... mentioning it won’t help me any.

“In that case, there’s one thing I’d like you to do”

“Yes! You want me to service you?”

“The hell’s with that!”

“Well, didn’t I just say I’m offering you my body?”

“..... the worst”

“Like hell I’m asking that! Liecia, don’t you look at me like that!”

Seems like Aisha is the type to run wild once she gets fired up.

Will I be okay with a guard like this? I wanted the best guard I can have.

“..... what I want your help with is to be our escort around the castle town”

“Why!?”

“Y, you want me to come along with you on your date?”

“Well, if anything happens it’ll be difficult with just me and Liecia. Even though it’s formally a date it’s just us going on an inspection around town

so it'll be alright”

“..... It's bothering me though”

Liecia was pouting for some reason. Did she want to have a date with just the two of us?

..... couldn't be¹. I'm only her fiancé as an official stance, after all.

¹ «TN: ET TU SOMA!!?:/ »

“Well, that's how it is. I'll be counting on you both on the day”

“Yes! Understood!”

“..... Haaah, all right”

In contrast to the energetic Aisha, Liecia looked glum.

Like I said, why?



This and that happened and came the day of the date.

Liecia, Aisha, and I were walking around the Parnam Castle town. Hakuya said to “show the citizens that you wanted to be friendly with them”, but of course he was kidding and on the appointed day he asked us to go incognito. I surely can't go walking around saying “I am thy King”. If I did so then Aisha alone won't be enough to guard me.

Which is why the three of us were each wearing the uniform of the Military Academy here in Parnam. I should've been going into college right about this time so why do I have to sadly go back to wearing uniform!? Anyway, Aisha was simply wearing school uniform, but Liecia whose face is well-known had her hair tied in a braid and was wearing glasses in an honor student disguise. This way we'd look to anyone like school friends who are going out to town.

“Liecia, the glasses look good on you”

“R, really?... thanks”

“Milord! How about my uniform!”

“..... Ah, hm. Doesn't really suit you”

“But why!?”

H~m, the school uniform looks almost exactly like a blazer, but that and the dark brown skin and silver hair of a Dark Elf doesn't really match. How should I put it, it's like seeing a cosplay of a school anime character, I guess... there's no pink-haired girl in real life and dyed hair just feels out of place, or thereabouts? This is the contrast between reality and fantasy, maybe....

“I don't think it looks that bad, though”

“Milady~”

“Hm. Well, it might've been my world's value standard”

I'm in a world with diverse peoples now. Better get used to it soon.

Rollrollrollrollrollrollroll.....

“..... Rather than Aisha, it's that thing you're dragging around that's getting on my mind”

“The thing I'm dragging around? this carry bag?”

“How is that a bag? It's got wheels on it”

“Yeah. It's got roller wheels underneath it so I can carry even heavy things easily”

“I see. Seems like something useful, huh”

Aisha looked at it wide-eyed. A carry bag is something that never existed in this country before.

By the way, this is order made by the castle town's artisans. The artisans who made this said they wanted to sell this as their product so I allowed them on the condition that they don't monopolize it. If it fills people's needs well then it will no longer be an oddity in a few years.

“But Your Highness, I can carry any luggage...”

“We're in disguise as school friends, it'll be weird for a schoolboy to have a girl carry his things”

To add to that, this contains my self-defense equipment.

No matter what happens I can't let go of this.

"And stop calling me 'Your Highness', we're incognito here"

"Yessir! So how should I address you..."

"You can call me normally by name. If you like you can call me by my given name [Kazuya]"

" Eh? "

Huh? Why does even Liecia have a dubious look?

"Eh.... isn't Soma's given name [Soma]?"

"Huh? Souma³ is obviously my family name. Kazuya is my given name"

"But you said your name is Soma Kazuya, right?"

"..... ah"

³ «TN: For clarification, whenever the raw says ソーマ I translate it as Soma, whereas 相馬 becomes Souma»

Whoops. This country puts the given name first like America or Europe. So I should've introduced myself as Kazuya Soma. Aaah, I see... so that's why everyone's been calling me [King Soma]. Come to think of it now, calling a King by their surname isn't normal. It's a hereditary position so several Kings would've had the same name.

"Can we fix it now?"

"Impossible, isn't it? Everyone thinks of you as Soma, and foreign documents have been written in the name of [Soma Elfrieden], since our engagement I think"

"DAAAAH WHATEVER! I never thought I'd fail this hard..."

"W, well, it's fine, right? I know, why not make it a public-private thing? We'll call you [Kazuya-dono] in private times like this"

Having Aisha follow up after me made me feel down even more.

"To even have that Aisha follow up after me..."

“Just what am I inside Kazuya-dono’s head!”

“Let’s see ... a failure of an Elf?”

“That’s way way over the line!”

“Sheesh, enough with your stand-up comedy⁴ act, let’s go”

⁴ «TN: manzai»

As Liecia dealt with a teary-eyed Aisha, she prompted us to go.

H~m... Even though she says go, we haven’t decided where we’re going to go to.

“Do you two have anywhere you want to go?”

“Nope”

“I’ll go anywhere Kazuya-dono goes”

“Mm. You two should at least act like you’re thinking about it”

It’s hard on me to be left with all the decisions. Now that reminds me, this is the first time I’ve been outside the castle, huh.

Hm.... In that case it’ll be better to go around looking at things. I’m a bit curious how much the policies I decided bore fruit, or didn’t.

“Well, let’s just go look around, I guess”



Parnam Central Park.

It was a large park situated in the center of the Parnam castle town. Despite being called a park it was only a place where they plant trees and shrubs and flowers, but the size of the place was over three Tokyo Domes. There was a huge fountain in the middle of the park, one that whenever there was a Royal Broadcast, could make it visible from several hundred meters away. There were seats prepared around the fountain just like a circular arena, several tens of thousands of people seemed to have gathered in this fountain plaza during the last royal broadcast. The scene would’ve been just like the idol Dorma Concert, I suppose.

Hm... It'll probably be interesting to hold a live concert here someday. I will certainly plan on it once Gyna-san's [Show Business and Celebrity Making using The Royal Broadcast Project (I'll call it the "Lorelei Project" since it's too long)] starts. One day this fountain plaza will be the Big Stage to Elfrieden's songsters and songstresses just like the [Tokyo Dome] or [Hibiya Theater].

... well, leaving the unhatched chickens uncounted, we went to the central park.

"It's quite a lovely spot with all the nature"

"The air is so clear even though we're right in the middle of the city. Mmm~"

Aisha looked all around while Liecia did a big stretch.

"Huh? But I think it wasn't all this pretty before..."

"That's because we worked hard to fix it"

I puffed my chest with pride to Liecia's question.

"What did you do to fix the park?"

"Not just the park. We fixed the entire Parnam underground, even more, we also fixed the regulations. Sanitation is much better compared to how it was a few months back, I believe"

Frankly speaking, before I fixed it this country's sanitation is at the level of a medieval European city. In other words, it's filthy. Horse droppings littered the streets like that's where it's supposed to be, and household sewage was drained from the houses into gutters by the roadside, giving off a foul stench in the summer. Because the idea of hygiene itself doesn't exist, these problems are left alone and are allowed to continue. Even though when the horse droppings dried they became airborne particles and caused all kinds of respiratory illnesses when people inhale them.

Which is why as a first step I maintain [Underground Sewers] as a measure against the sanitation problem.

"Underground sewers ... when did you make those!?"

“Well, it wasn’t that much work. Parnam already had underground tunnels going all over the place to begin with, so I just ran river water through those”

“AREN’T THOSE THE ROYAL ESCAPE ROUTES!”

As Liecia said, the underground tunnels going all across Parnam were routes used by royalty to escape if the capital came under enemy attack and its fall became inevitable. In order to prevent the enemy from easily chasing after them when the passages were discovered, it was made in the form of a maze, the scale of which covered the entire area of Parnam. It was convenient for making sewers out of”

“To even make those into sewers what’ll you do if there’s an emergency!”

“If it came to it that the royalty had to escape from the capital, doesn’t it mean the country is checkmated? I personally would surrender at the point when they approached the capital”

“That quick?”

“Liecia, a King would be safe so long as the people are his allies”

This is one of Machiavelli’s teachings.

He says “the best possible fortress is not to be hated by the people”⁵ A ruler has the two enemies of rebels internally, and foreign invaders externally, but if he had the support of the people the rebels would not be able to recruit allies or instigate a revolt and can only give up. Conversely, if the people hated him, there shall never be a lack of foreigners willing to assist such a people, and he would sooner or later come to ruin.

⁵ «TN: The Prince, Chapter XX»

“Even if the throne is lost, if he had the people’s support he can make his return. On the other hand, if only the King survived, even if he made a successful counteroffensive he would be prey to another conqueror without the people protecting him”

“... it’s a harsh world, huh”

“That’s reality”

Chapter 4: Parnam Vacation Day C

“Anyway, that’s how I easily made the underground sewers, but the settlement tanks...”

“Settlement tanks?”

Liecia and I sat down under the shadow of the trees in the park and had a chat. Meanwhile, Aisha found the conversation tedious so she plopped herself down by a tree and was now dozing off, leaning on the tree trunk. Well, a warrior of Aisha’s caliber would surely be alert to their surroundings even if they were asleep so it wouldn’t be a problem. So I continued talking.

“If I just dumped the sewage into the river as it is then the river would get polluted, right? Household sewage contains pathogens and parasites and industrial waste often contains toxins, you see. To avoid that we need a place where we can let the water settle for a while and filter it through sand and pebbles. That’s the settlement tanks”

Well, there’s no need to be that anal-retentive right now. This country still had no idea what pollution is, and with the current level of its livelihood and engineering there would be little effect of dumping the waste into the river. There’s no custom of scattering cremated ashes into the river, either. However, as the country expands from now pollution will inevitably be a problem. It’s better to handle that sooner rather than later. The people of Japan took their lessons from experiencing Minamata Disease, cadmium poisoning, and Yokkaichi Asthma, but there is no reason to deliberately let that happen to this country’s people.

“So? How did you make the tanks?”

“Ah, I made the Royal Guard dig holes for that...”

“What did you make Ludwin-dono do?”

“Well, it’ll cost more to ask contractors to do it. It trains their ‘combat engineering skill’ at the same time. too”

Digging holes, filling, and reinforcing. This is perfect for training them

in digging trenches. This world's warfare still mainly consists of facing the enemy in an open field, By having a troop that can do World War I style trench warfare we'd be getting a lead on everyone else, but enough of that.

“When they dug out the settlement tanks, they found lots of dragon and demonic creature bones”

“Bones?”

“Yep, bones. Dragon bones or Giant's bones, lots of them”

It was like a demon graveyard, said a soldier who was there at the time. Dragon, Giant, or Gargoyle, lots of bones that were clearly not human at a glance. What's more, they were scattered about at random, and according to a scholar specializing in those things, the stratum they were on were thousands of years old.

“Was there a dungeon there once?”

Liecia tilted her head, but I shook mine.

“Like I said, it's a stratum. Which means that thousands of years ago it was on 'the surface'”

“Surface... but that's impossible. Demons do sometimes come out of dungeons, but not in large numbers like that. So long as it's not Demon King territory there's no way demons come out to the surface in those numbers ... gasp !”

“Which means that the demons that appeared some tens of years ago were already here on the surface thousands of years ago. If you think about it, there are dungeons in lots of places all over the country, and demons live inside them. Thousands of years ago the demons living in this land died out for some reason, but some of them hid in places like dungeons and survived, or so the scholars think”

It's as if dinosaurs that should've gone extinct survived in some remote regions somewhere, or viruses that should've been eradicated bided their time and re-appeared.

“So what are you getting at? Are you saying the demons and demon race in the Demon King territory didn’t ‘appear’ but ‘returned’?”

“I don’t know for sure. We have to gather information from many places and use Tomoe-chan’s power and make our judgement. It’s too dangerous to decide with just the information we have now”

What are we fighting? What are our enemies? These questions have no easy answers.

“Also, there’s one other thing that’s bugging me...”

“There’s more!?”

“Leaving the matter of the bones aside, we needed to build the settlement tanks. Which is why I had the scholars make excavation records and dig them out, but one of the biggest and most well-preserved complete set of dragon bones went missing. It was supposed to be put for exhibition and was given to the custody of the Parnam Royal Museum, but ...”

“Was it stolen?”

“It would be good if that were the case... well, not good good, but an almost twenty meter set of dragon bones put on exhibition would be a pain to carry and there are no traces of anything like that being transported outside Parnam’s walls. The bones are now listed as missing. It’s almost as if it went off on its own and flew away”

“.....! Could it be a Skull Dragon!?”

“The scholars suspected as much”

Skull Dragon. Such a demon seemed to exist in this world. A dragon, who could annihilate an entire country if it flew into a rage, has enormous quantities of magic power within it. This power remains in its corpse after its death. Normally that power would leak away but in cases where the dragon died with a grudge (or rather, where the corpse was left alone for a long time), it would react to the remaining magic power and turn into an all-bone [Skull Dragon].

Such a Skull Dragon was marked an A-rank hazardous creature by the country. A Dragon is 'merely' unmanageable once it goes into rage, but a Skull Dragon is belligerent to boot. Ones with wings attached could fly despite there being no membrane on those wings, and it would let out miasma that would kill living things just by being there. It could use the [Breath] a Dragon uses while alive, too, so it was a living (dead?) calamity that a country would bring out its entire army to beat. However, this time that's probably not the case.

"If that were the case, Parnam would've already been bogged down in miasma. In order to prevent that, the scholars had already done magic scanning. That fossil should have no more magic power left.

"Phew ... thank goodness"

"Which is why it's even more incomprehensible. Where did the dragon bones go?"

Almost a month had passed since the Dragon bones disappeared, but it still was nowhere to be found. I'm pretty sure it was somehow transported outside the castle town. But in that case, what were their motives? The magic power had all but completely leaked out and the bones themselves have been petrified, there are almost no use for it now. It already has no value as a catalyst. At most what they could do was put it up for exhibition and attract tourists like we were going to do.

I don't get it. Which is exactly why I'm feeling gloomy. I laid myself down on the spot. Liecia looked at me blankly but I didn't mind her.

"Your clothes, they'll get dirty you know?"

"They can be washed. With my position as it is they'll be washed even if they were left alone"

"A King isn't someone who should get dirty"

"Well ... dignity is important, too"

Especially in high society. If a politician in modern Japan were to make daily visits to an expensive restaurant he will get criticised, on the contrary, he can appeal to the public by visiting a commoner's gyudon

shop. However, in a society with a caste system like this country, if the king were to do something like that his retainers are going to think “I can overthrow this king”. A king who is taken lightly by his retainers will be abandoned by the people. In a vertically structured society the people don’t look at the king directly, but catch glimpses of his existence through his retainers. If the retainers consider the king insignificant, the people will think the same way, too.

“..... what a pain”

“I shouldn’t be saying this as one of the ones pushing the job to you, but give it up”

“Yeah yeah. Ah, having a day off sure is great~”

I made a big stretch. It turned out having one mind off from work feels great. Which reminds me, I’ve been working non-stop since I came to this world. There are mountains of things to do, things I have to do, and things I can’t not do, I had always been racking my head on them. Times like these where I don’t have to think about anything is superb.

“Ah~ I feel like melting and returning to the earth~”

“.....”

Liecia looked at me saying such things, she seemed like she thought of something and said with a modest voice.

“You want a lap pillow?”



I prepared my lap by sitting with my legs bent backwards¹ and placed Soma’s head on it. There are lap pillows where the other party lays straight from where you’re looking² and ones where they lay sideways³, I’m doing the straight one. If I take a peek at Soma’s face he’ll be upside down. The back of Soma’s head lays between my thighs, it feels a little ticklish. That’s because he directly touches the parts where my skirt doesn’t reach.

¹ «TN: onnanokozuwari»

² «TN: like so ...»

³ «TN: and so ...»

“T, this is ... strangely embarrassing”

“Soma’s face turned red. most likely mine, too.

“I wonder whether ‘the one giving’ or ‘the one receiving’ would be more embarrassed?”

“Well, that would be ‘the one looking at them’, no?”

“Ahaha. Could be”

I wonder what the look on Aisha’s face will be if she weren’t asleep. Would she turn red seeing an engaged couple scene, or will she make a way-off-the-mark retort like “You can’t make the Princess do something like that! If you want a pillow I’ll do it!”. somehow I feel like the latter is more likely.

“Do we look like an engaged couple now?”

“Just in name only, though”

“.....”

Again? Soma would always say “The engagement is only a temporary one. I’m only holding on to the throne for a little while” to people immediately near him. He really intends to hand over the throne to me and leave government service once the country has been stabilized. The reason he would explain his reforms to me in detail was likely because of this ‘handover’. I feel like I understand the human being called Soma a little now that I could guess what he’s thinking.

It’s not like I don’t understand how he feels. I don’t want wealth or glory. All I wanted is a life of peace and quiet. To Soma, the work of a [King], bound with [Noblesse Oblige⁴], is the exact opposite of what he wanted. Even though it was Father who inconsiderately did it, I feel ashamed to have pushed such a troublesome job on him.

⁴ «TN: Noble’s obligation. The responsibility of a noble to lead in exchange of his rights and privileges»

But right now, this country is changing with Soma at the center of it. This unchanging, never progressing country, who our neighbors call [A moldy old-fashioned kingdom]. It was Soma's ability that gathered talented people and solved the food problem before it became serious. Both Hakuya Kwonmin and Poncho-san also came to government service because of Soma. I'm not sure I'll be able to secure them had I been the one to inherit the throne.

Most of all, I personally want Soma to be the king, which is why,

"Soma, do you hate being my fiancée?"

Those words suddenly came out of my mouth. Soma opened his eyes wide, blushed, and looked away.

"..... that's not fair, the way you're putting it"

"R, really?"

"Then how about you Liecia? Are you alright with being my fiancée?"

"I don't mind"

That strangely came out loud and clear, surprising even myself. Just that I feel a little embarrassed after the words came out.

"You see, Soma is better than me at being king"

"Just because I'm better at being king, you don't mind being the fiancée of someone you don't like?"

"Isn't that how royals are?"

"I'm not a royal. Also ... well I prefer a marriage of love"

"Then do you hate me Soma? You're saying that you'll never come to love me?"

"Ngh... like I said, that's unfair how you're putting it. Males, you know, if you act like you're interested in them even just a little bit, they'll say [she's definitely fallen for me!]. They know it's an illusion, but nevertheless they'll rack their brains out weighing between 99% clear vision and 1% hope⁵. If a beautiful girl like Liecia says something like that,

there's no way it wouldn't be getting in my head.

⁵ «AN: this is personal opinion»

Soma spoke fast as if trying to cover something up. When he's doing official business, he'd be astonishingly pragmatic and calm, and yet he'd get all nervous when it comes to things like these, he looks kind of amusing.

"Fufu. Even though you can move the country, you can't handle something like this at all, can you?"

"..... I do not have enough experience. In several ways"

"I'm also always studying and training and not too experienced either, though?"

"Don't lump boys and girls together. Their basic specs are as different as a zelring compared to a dragon⁶"

"Um, excuse me"

⁶ «AN: depending on the person»

While we were having that conversation, a timid voice came from behind. When I turned my head there was Aisha who had waken up sometime ago and was smiling bitterly, looking at us with a triple-concentrated look.

"When can I stop pretending to be asleep?"

" "

Needless to say, the two of us jumped to our feet.

Chapter 4: Parnam Vacation Day D [1]

Souma's Perspective

Because of this, the capital city's inspection that was treated more like a date instead, resumed once more.

It had already reached lunch time, just the time when our stomach felt empty, we three then decided to go and check the singing café where Juna-san worked. When we were walking on a stone paved road that had shops lined up on the both sides of the road, I heard Liecia say,

「It's something that you had said before, but..... if I remember correctly you mentioned the term 『established laws』. What do you mean?」(Liecia)

「Ah, that's only the 『Act of Pedestrians' Paradise Pathway[2]』 and the 『Act of Public Management of Garbage Disposal』.」(Souma)

「..... Sorry. I have no idea what you are talking about.」(Liecia)

Well, that may be true. Even so, both were directly connected to the sanitation issue.

「First the 『Act of Pedestrians' Paradise Pathway』, this is simply a prohibition of driving horses other than those on the major road. There are exceptions for horse wagons that transport goods; also the restriction is only active for several hours in the morning. Didn't you realize that we haven't seen a single horse in the road for some time now?」(Souma)

「Now that you mention it.....」(Liecia)

Liecia looked around restlessly, but there was no horse to be found.

「This is simply to reduce horse-related traffic accidents, though there is also another meaning to preparing an environment where the customer can purchase things in safety and, in doing so, stimulate economic activity..... however, the main objective was the horse dung.」(Souma)

「Horse dung?」(Liecia)

「Don't horses shit while they are moving? The dried leftover dung would then get blown away by the wind and then damage the lungs of

people who inhaled it. It's easier for the horse dung to be left in a place that was usually unsanitary. It's also easier to collect the horse dung if the horse was limited to the major roads. With this, the number of people who suffered with pneumonia will decrease from now on.」(Souma)

「Eh! That's it!?!」(Liecia)

「.....Yeah. Maybe it's just “that's it” but if we just do “it”, then we could save lives.」(Souma)

My way of talking had become a bit blunt and harsh. But, I was a bit indignant with the “that's it”, an expression used to look down on others..... Just now I nearly burst out of anger. I need to reflect on this. After receiving my rebuttal, Liecia's face went pale. “That's it” was something that couldn't be achieved during her parents reign. It wasn't like it was Liecia personally ruling at that time, but maybe this was because she was supposed to be royalty.

「Well, I think it was understandable. This country didn't have any concepts about sanitation from the start. Even amongst the doctors, only two people understand this notion.」(Souma)

「.....」(Liecia)

I had previously thought that perhaps because magic exists in this country, causing scientific and technology field to be in shambles, the same also could be said about the field of medical science. Like all fantasy settings, this world also had 『Healing Magic』. By converting the magic power inside the body into special waves, it would increase the body's natural healing power. It was effective for external wounds like abrasions, cuts or bruises. On people with amazing natural healing power, they were even able to reattach a severed arm like it was brand new. People who have seen this much would think that it was the work of God.

On the other hand, it wasn't very effective on viral diseases such as the cold or other infectious diseases that couldn't be cured by the body's natural healing power. Furthermore, its effectiveness on curing external wounds was also lower on people with a lower natural healing power like

the elderly. It was something that was easy to be understood as long as someone know the mechanisms underlying it, or so what I think, however the citizens of this country didn't know about the existence of germs, let alone viruses. Because they were trying to forcefully find the answer without having any knowledge about it, they could only find an answer within the limited bounds of their own common sense.

〈Healing magic is not effective〉 = 〈Even the work of God cannot cure it〉 = 〈a curse from the Devil〉

Such a conclusion was drawn inside their heads and medications for illness were traded as just some questionable magical goods instead of real medicine. 「If you buy this vase, you won't get sick!」 This was a common business practice that I couldn't even laugh at. If you buy it, you may as well wear a spring onion on your neck and go to sleep.[3]

However, there was still a sliver of hope. Just like the two doctors I mentioned before.

If those two become the center of medical technology reform, then.....

「Hey, Souma, why are you muttering to yourself?」(Liecia)

I came back to my senses after being called out by Liecia. Apparently, I was too deep in my own thoughts.

「Sorry, I'm just thinking for a bit」(Souma)

「Mou..... even so what about the other one, the 『Act of Public Management of Garbage Disposal』, that you had said before?」(Liecia)

「Just like what the name say. Does Liecia know about what the typical method of garbage disposal is in this country?」(Souma)

「They are split into 『Burnable Trash』 and 『Unburnable Trash』. The burnable trash is to be burned and unburnable trash is to be buried, right?」(Liecia)

「Oh, you answer this so smoothly, how unexpected.」(Souma)

「Do you think that I'm ignorant of the ways of the world because I'm royalty? Don't be foolish. When I attended the Military Academy, I lived

at dormitory so of course I know about it.」(Liecia)

I see. It wasn't like I thought her as ignorant of the ways of the world.....

「However, it's the wrong answer.」(Souma)

「Eh?」(Liecia)

「I said “typical”, right? Liecia's answer comes from a way of thinking that suits an ojou-sama from upper class. So it is very different from the commoner's common sense.」(Souma)

「Then-then, what does the commoner's common sense say?!」(Liecia)

「Aisha, how do you deal with trash in the Dark Elves' Forest?」(Souma)

「Eh? Trash?」(Aisha)

Aisha was struck dumb when she was suddenly mentioned, but then she immediately thought over it.

「Let's see..... Burning it.」(Aisha)

「That's it?」(Liecia)

「That's it.」(Aisha)

「It can't be just only that! What about the things that can't be burned?!」(Liecia)

Liecia was flared up but Aisha was staring in confusion.

「Eh? To begin with, is there any trash that is unburnable?」(Aisha)

「Of course there is! What about broken tools?」(Liecia)

「Repaired and reused.」(Aisha)

「.....Eh?」(Liecia)

「Kitchen trash can be buried as fertilizer. Broken pottery shards are finely grounded and scattered on the ground. Broken metal tools are repaired and reused. If it is still broken, then it will sold as scrap metal (to merchants that collect metal waste). Trash is just mostly made up of things like wooden splinters or damaged leather armor..... They are

usually burned together in an open fire.」(Aisha)

「Ah..... Eh.....?」(Liecia)

This time it was Liecia's turn to be struck dumb. Hearing this conversation, I unintentionally laughed out loud.

「Hahaha, Aisha's answer just now is correct.」(Souma)

「Souma.....」(Liecia)

「For the upper classes that were worried about their appearances or for the army where their equipment correlates with their life and death, their tools must naturally be always brand new. However, it isn't the same case for a commoner family. Well of course they don't go to the extreme like the elves in Aisha's story, but it is close to what the citizens of the capital do. The difference is that they do burn their kitchen waste, and there is a custom to collect wooden furniture and oversized trash to burn them in the plaza at the end of the year. That's why for them, garbage is only made up of burnable things.」(Souma)

This world still didn't have any plastic or polystyrene foam[4], so there weren't any things that couldn't be reused after being given special treatment. In the first place, tools were made from metal, stone (also glass or porcelain) or wood. Iron could be melted and reused, and even if they left the stone tools alone, as time passed by they would be reclaimed by nature. There was exceptions for artificial materials (magic materials) that were created by the magicians, but the very thing itself was valuable and discarding them as trash was something unbelievable.

For example: Metal, due to its expensive cost, the general populace would thoroughly repair and reuse it, since it was easy to mend by hammering iron into it. If after this process and it still wasn't usable, then it would be cheaper to buy a replacement and the old item would be bought by a scrap iron merchant for a few coins. The scrap iron merchant then would melt the collected metals and then cast them using the same melted metals. However, since these individuals do this process without possessing proper equipment and didn't have enough time and labor, they can only produce metals of poor quality that was hardly of any use. Since

they only casted the melted metal as it was, then it would be unavoidable for impurities to be incorporated by this process. The result was poor quality metal that appeared in the the country's market.

This country had limited resources. Since only poor quality metal circulated in the domestic market, in the end, high quality metal must be imported from other countries. I wanted to reduce this expense. However, even if I told scrap iron merchants to reduce the impurities and recycle it as high quality metal, the cost would increase and their profit would greatly become deficit. Therefore:

「Therefore, the garbage disposal will be managed publicly..... In other words, the country will be the one who does it. If there are any individuals who are dissatisfied, the country will provide money and private facilities for them, so the amount of labor and time can also be reduced. Extract each and every nail from discarded wood, then you could remake the iron into another shape.」(Souma)

「That's amazing, but..... Doesn't this rob the scrap iron merchants of their jobs?」(Liecia)

「There will be no problems. For this job, we employed the scrap iron merchants as public servants.」(Souma)

In the first place, their job was underpaid. Buying the broken metal cheaply and stocking it, melting and casting it, and then selling it wholesale to the craftsman guild. However, since low quality metal was useless for most purposes, they must sell it dirt cheap with them receiving almost no profit. In reality, the scrap iron merchant was an occupation belonging to the lowest occupation hierarchy. Since they are people who deal with trash, they were considered as practically no different than beggars.

「However, since this is a country service, then the money to buy it will also come from the country. The country has prepared proper facilities that could smelt high quality metal. Even when doing transactions with the craftsman guild, since it was something that the country does, the guild couldn't beat the price when they purchase it. Then, the former

scrap metal merchant turned public servant would receive a salary from the country every month. Perhaps, wouldn't their earnings be increased 10 fold when compared to what they had before?」(Souma)

「That is..... There will be no complaints, right?」(Liecia)

Actually, there was not a single complaint from the scrap iron merchants. Or rather, when I dispatched the minister that was in charge of the garbage disposal to do the inspection of the reprocessing facility, he found out that all the employees gave their thanks in tears.

「But, if we are careless, then won't this be more expensive than importing it from other countries?」(Liecia)

When Liecia pointed this out, I only nodded, 「Well, I must admit it.」

「Maybe at the current stage, it's a little bit of a minus? However, paying the cost inside the country and paying the cost outside the country have completely different meaning. If we paid the cost outside the country, then there will be outflow of capital, however if we paid the cost inside the country, that capital would circulate inside our country's economy.」
(Souma)

「A-Again it's about economics.....」(Liecia)

It seems that Liecia, who was skilled in the realm of military affairs, was mostly poor in this field. Since the army also has people dealing with army bureaucracy, they might have officers that paid attention to maintaining the supply lines.

「Then about military affairs. Let me tell you a diplomatic story: If you are economizing a resource inside your country, then the other countries couldn't use that resource importation as a diplomatic tool anymore. For example, if the Amidonia Dukedom that was aiming out country with vulture like hunger, restricted exportation of iron to our country, what will you say?」(Souma)

「..... I would be troubled. To restart the trade I would do whatever conditions that were thrust upon me.」(Liecia)

「That's right. This was also an aim to prevent those conditions.」

(Souma)

I couldn't mention the country's name, but in my world, there was a country that has a relatively scarce natural resource that was used as a diplomatic tool by another country to pressure it. Well, because of that, the island country turned to different countries to acquire the resources and developing substituting technology. As the result, the value of resource scarcity card used by the neighboring country was heavily declined. However, I won't mention which country that is![5]

「By economizing resources, even if another country stopped their exports, we could reduce the damage, and even store some part of the circulating resource during peacetime as a preparation stock in case of emergency.」(Souma)

「I see. That's why even if it causes a deficit, there is a point of turning it into public management.」(Liecia)

Liecia was quick to understand Military and Diplomacy matters. Perhaps she was a type who had her learning ability influenced by her likes and dislikes. Even when she was a princess of a country, would this be alright? By the way, at this time Aisha went, 「Rather than that, I want to eat a meal」 and for a long time she made an expression just like a dog that was ordered to 「Wait」 for it meals. Even today, this disappointing starving dark elf didn't change in her priority.



In the avenue that was hit by the sun's rays was a popular Singing Café: 『Lorelei』.[6]

Needless to say, this was the shop where our songstress[7] Juna Dohma, worked. When I heard the term 「singing café」, I had an impression that it was 「A café that provides Karaoke which the customer is free to sing along to」, however the place that was called a singing café in this country was a place where you could hear the songstresses' singing while enjoying afternoon tea time. In the night, it turned into something similar to a Jazz Bar.

It wasn't like the coffeehouses that only belonged to a certain chain

store that kept on multiplying, but was there any shop like this in Japan? Though the Maid Cafe option was also probable.....

「We wanted to visit right? Let's enter it quickly.」(Liecia)

「My stomach is empty.....」(Aisha)

Prompted by both Liecia and Aisha, we passed through the 『Lorelei』's door.

At the moment when we entered the shop, we could hear Juna-san's singing.

Hearing that singing, I fell on my knees. C-Come to think of it, this tune was something I taught to her.

As expected from Juna-san. She could perfectly sing the English lyrics that even sounds mysterious to me.

「Wow. What amazing singing. As expected from Juna-dono.」(Aisha)

「I don't understand the meaning of the words, but the song is nice.」
(Liecia)

Aisha and Liecia also showed their admiration. Yes, I might say that it was a good song.

On that day I first met with her, I promised Juna-san that I would teach her the songs I knew, but if I had actually thought this through carefully, I would have realized that I only knew anime songs from the 80s and didn't know even one popular song. Having said that, I was feeling bad that the first song I taught to her was an anime song so I ended up deciding to teach her an anime song that didn't sound like one.

Neil Sedaka's 『Better Days are Coming』[8]

Maybe it was easier to understand if I mentioned that this song was actually the basis for the song covered[9] by Aikawa Maya[10] 『Z Beyond Time』[11], the first key opening song of the national robot anime 『Mobile Suit Z Gundam』. But now I think that even in the future it was fine to teach her even more anime songs. Juna-san personally resembled Yakushimaru Hiroko-san[12] when singing popular songs and Moriguchi

Hiroko-san[13] when singing anime songs. I surely wanted to hear her singing songs from 『Detective Story』[14] or 『From the Aqueous Star with Love』[15]. I wonder if she could sing these someday.....

The shop interior gave a subdued Showa-era[16] modernish style ambiance.

We sat down at a table in the corner and listened attentively to each and every one of Juna-san's songs. After a while, Juna-san finished with singing, noticed us and came to our seats.

「Isn't this Your Ma-...」(Juna)

「Good day to you, Juna-san, I don't know whether you remember me or not, but I am Kazuya, heir of a crepe store in Echigo Kingdom![17]」
(Souma)

I was talking rapidly and incessantly to interrupt Juna-san's words.

The capable Juna-san seemed to grasp the situation,

「Ah yes, it's Kazuya-san. Long time no see. Is your father well?」(Juna)

「Yes. He is really energetic since just recently my mother found out about him fooling around and it became a big problem.」(Souma)

「Is that so? Kazuya-san also needs to be careful when dealing with women, right?」(Juna)

She matched her stories with mine. As one would expect, in a place in front of public eyes like this, I would be troubled if she bowed her head down and greeted me with 「Your Majesty」 since I was travelling incognito. However, her ability to adlib and match my random talk on the spot, as expected from a talented person that I wanted to be in the castle by all means.

「If I pay you five times your current wage, would you become my exclusive secretary?」(Souma)

「Though I appreciate your proposal, however I think that this job, where I please everyone with my song, is my life calling, so I'm really sorry for refusing the offer.」(Juna)

She gently declined. Even the way she refused was refined.

「That is really regrettable. However since there is saying that rather than arranged to decorate the room, wildflowers are more beautiful when they bloom freely in the fields.」(Souma)

「Ara, even if they weren't for decoration, the flowers inside the vase would be blooming with their best efforts so that they could be admired.」(Juna)

「I see, if that's the case, isn't it necessary to improve the arrangements so that it would be worthy for admiration?」(Souma)

「Yes. I believe that the flower wouldn't mind being broken during that process.」(Juna)

「Hahahahahaha.」(Souma)

「Ufufufufu.」(Juna)

Juna-san joined me in laughing. Seeing both of us like this, Liecia was a bit interested, and so she said.

「..... Somehow the conversation between both of you is as if you are probing each other's intentions.」(Liecia)

It looked like it. But it was different, Liecia.

This was perhaps a 「scene where the onesan gently chides the otouto who wishes for something beyond his ability.」

..... with the age hardly needing to be changed.[18]

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Sanitation is important! London and Major Cities in Europe learned this the hard way when industrialization begins!

And yes... We need to sort our trash well... Now, let's see how my compost bin going...

*

[1] The title is a pun on "ROMAN HOLIDAY"... Now I only can see Liecia as Audrey Hepburn...

[2] A Pedestrian Paradise is a term for a Road that exclusive to pedestrians with no Cars allowed to enter except for special reasons (like ambulance, police or firetruck with official duty). Example: Melbourne, Akihabara, Iowa City Downtown. My personal view: Downtown should be devoid of cars, except for Shuttle Buses.

[3] A cold folk medicine in Japan. Spring Onion or Negi (*Allium fistulosum*) is not the same as Leek (*Allium ampeloprasum*), despite many people believing otherwise (It was one of 7 myth of Hatsune Miku). [Editor's note: They taste completely different, how do you mix them up???) TL: They look the same for some people.

[4] Commonly known as Styrofoam, but this is a brand.

[5] Remember a certain Eastern Eurasian country that (allegedly) reduces the export of rare earth metals due to fishing boat dispute with a certain island nation? (and eventually crash the market so hard that many investor lose their money when the market was supersaturated by supply?)

[6] This is the best I can do with the word play of 日の当たる and 当たりにある.

[7] Songstress is Utahime歌姫 in Japan. Literally means: Singing Princess or Song Princess.

[8] American male singer-songwriter Neil Sedaka. He released "Better Days are Coming" in 1972. The song was reworked to Anime Opening Song for Mobile Zeta Gundam in 1985.

[9] Cover in Japanese Song term means, singing a song that was first sung by another singer.

[10] Aikawa Maya 鮎川麻弥. A Japanese female singer-songwriter. Famous for Sunrise's anime opening in the late 1980's.

[11]Z・刻を越えて (Zeta - Toki o Koete).

[12] Yakushimaru Hiroko 薬師丸 ひろ子. A famous Japanese actress-singer in the 1980's.

[13] Moriguchi Hiroko 森口 博子. A Japanese singer that sung many Gundam songs in the 80's. For the people who was born after 80's she is the singer of One Punch Man ending song.

[14] 探偵物語 Tantei Monogatari, an action Japanese TV series starring Yusaku Matsuda which was originally broadcast on Nippon TV in 27 forty-five-minute episodes from September 18, 1979 to April 1, 1980. It was about an ex-San Francisco police turned private detective who drives Vespa scooter, smokes Camel cigarettes, wore black and white suit and glasses. Must be seen to be believed. (He was the basis for Admiral Aokiji in OnePiece)

[15] 水の星へ愛をこめて Mizu no Hoshi e Ai wo Komete. Zeta Gundam Second Opening Song. Also sang by Moriguchi Hiroko

[16] A Japanese Regnal Year 1926-1989

[17] Echigo is an old name for Niigata prefecture.

[18] So Juna was older than Souma. I see.

Chapter 4: Parnam Vacation Day E

Souma's Perspective

「*sluuuuuuuuuurp*..... At any rate, Zelring udon is delicious.」(Aisha)

We decided to have a late lunch in the café 『Lorelei』 .

After finishing eating her serving of one full bowl of Zelring udon, Aisha presented the empty bowl to the waiter-san, 「Give me seconds!」. A café wasn't a place with that way of eating, right?..... Well, whatever.

「Even so, Zelring udon in a café is.....」(Souma)

「Does it not suit your tastes?」(Juna)

Juna-san showed a worried expression, so I shook my head and said, 「Ah, it's not that.」

「I'm troubled as to whether it would be alright to slurp udon inside of a shop that has such excellent ambiance.」(Souma) 「After that broadcast, there were many people who want to eat it. Since we still have not fully escaped from the food shortages, this sort of cheap ingredient is gratefully appreciated.」(Juna) 「For you to concede like this.....I'm sorry for my lack of ability.」(Souma) 「No, it is not..... I think that Kazuya-san has kindly done his best to perform his duty.」(Juna) The graceful smile from Juna-san, somehow made my heart feel warm and fluffly.

hithit*

Yes, that's why Liecia, stop kicking my shin under the table.

「Isn't Souma's attitude somehow different to Juna-san alone?」(Liecia)

「Ah, slurrrp..... then, I too.... slurrrp..... feel it.」(Aisha) 「..... It's inevitable, right? Of course, I will be nervous when talking to a beautiful onesan. Also, Aisha, decide whether you want to talk or to eat.」(Souma) 「*slurrrrp*」(Aisha)

So you chose to eat, huh? I decided to ignore the obligatory tsukkomi that passed by through my mind.

「..... Even though you had said that 'you're beautiful' to me

(*whisper*)](Liecia) 「It's not like that, I just believe that Liecia and Juna-san's beauty vectors are different, don't you agree?」(Souma) 「Wha-How can you hear it?」(Liecia)

No, if you didn't want to be heard then lower your volume more.

After all, I'm not a deaf protagonist that would ignore a girl muttering and say 「Eh? Did you say something?」..... I also have some unusual considerations since the lap-pillow event some time ago.

「Ca-can't you just ignore it, right?」(Liecia)

「Ignore it, huh? Don't underestimate a healthy boy delusions of grandeur towards a girl.[1]」(Souma) 「Araara, your face has become bright red. Both of you are really innocent, I see.」(Juna) Juna looked at our quarrel while smiling continuously.

Beside her, Aisha was slurping udon as if pouting.

「slurrrrp.... why do you notice the princess' goodwill and yet..... slurrrrrrp keep ignoring me..... slurrrrp. Ah, please give me a second.」(Aisha) 「This might be impertinent for me to say..... It is because of your conduct that he did not take you seriously, right?」(Juna) 「Juna-dono!? Do you mean there was something wrong with me!?」(Aisha)

「That is your gluttony. When you first had the audience in the royal castle and spoke directly to the king, you looked like a dignified brave woman, but recently Aisha-san has been only eating food, so it is very disappointing.」(Juna) 「H-How could this beeeeeeeee....!?!」(Aisha)

Aisha was looking at me as if to say 「That's a lie, King.」

I and Lieca smiled at her, while we made an 「X」 mark with our hands.

After all, I agree 100 percent with Juna-san's opinion.

「It's obvious that you've outdone Poncho in his own game.」(Liecia)

「I wonder where the gallant Aisha has gone into.」(Juna)

「Ue~n! There weren't varying dishes like these in the forest so I couldn't help it!」(Aisha) 「In the first place, why did you try to seduce me even when I already have a fiancée (temporary).....」(Souma) 「「「Eh?」」」

(Liecia)(Juna)(Aisha)

The three girls stared me with a puzzled look. Did I say something strange?

「Umm..... Souma? In this country, if someone is affluent then polygamy is an acceptable practice you know?」(Liecia) 「Conversely, if a woman has enough financial capability, then it is also possible to do polyandry. Although it is unusual.」(Juna) 「Since if it was limited to monogamy, if something happens, then the house line could become extinct.」(Aisha) Liecia, Juna-san and Aisha replied with serious expressions.

Are you serious?..... Ah, no, I think they are serious. The society in this world still hadn't come out from the Dark Ages into the Middle Ages. The birthrate was also not steady, the hygiene and medical science field were undeveloped; in addition it was a turbulent age where it was rare for people to reach their maximum life expectancy. Furthermore, their medieval society treasured the concept of a 『House』, if they have enough financial power to support it, then they would wish to have many children as their heir. For that reason, they adopted a practice of polygamy. I could understand this.

「But there were no other queens other than Liecia's mother.....」
(Souma) If the King also committed polygamy, then Liecia's father should have additional wives right? Actually, I also was pestered by Hakuya to quickly make some heirs.

「Ah, the one with Royal Prerogative was my Mother, since she was the granddaughter of the previously reigning King before King Albert[2].」
(Liecia) 「Then that means the King married into the family!」(Souma)

「Yes, that's why even if he took many wives there would be no meaning. Only the children from my Mother held succession rights.....Well, I don't know if perhaps I had half-siblings that didn't hold succession rights.」

「Huh? Then would it be okay for the King to yield the throne to me?」
(Souma) 「There will be no problem. My father is standing in the front but without consent from my Mother he couldn't abdicate.」

So that means that the King's abdication was not just of his own

judgment but also acknowledged by the Queen, huh?

「Moreover, there was no one who held the succession rights other than me, so I think that it was not that much different from choosing a son-in-law. The difference is whether the Royal Prerogative was with me or with my spouse.」(Liecia) 「..... Then wouldn't it better for Liecia to rule as Queen?」(Souma)

「Then every one of Souma's reforms would require my consent, you know? Isn't that bothersome?」(Liecia) 「That is..... certainly, yes.」(Souma)

It wasn't that I thought Liecia was stupid, but if I need consented on every plan, then the administrative reform could lag behind even more. Moreover, if the highest decision maker and the reform advocator were two different people, then an opposition faction could arise and obstruct those two people from cooperating and cause many troubles for the reforms.

「That's why Liecia's father immediately made a decision to transfer the whole authority to me....」(Souma) 「That's true..... Even now, I thought he was extremely obedient.」(Liecia) But that burden was shifted to us. Both of us made a sigh.

「Therefore, if Souma wished for polygamy then.....it's possible.」(Liecia) 「Will Liecia fine with that?」(Souma)

「Though I am not delighted with it, if because of it, Souma would take the throne then...」(Liecia) 「Isn't your understanding too much.....」(Souma)

「If it is only 8 wives including me, then I'll permit it.」(Liecia)

「That's too much! I can't bear the responsibility if it was that many, you know!?!」(Souma) It wasn't that I didn't get emotionally touched after hearing the possibility of creating a harem..... But somehow, I could only imagine a future full with hardships. I wasn't a person who was good at dealing with women and it was clear that if their numbers increased then proportionally, my own embarrassment also increased.

「By the way, what is the basis for that number?」(Souma)

「It's one week divided.」(Liecia)

This world had 8 days per week. That was the reason!?

「Then what is the case of having several people simultaneously?」(Juna)

「The rotation becomes faster, huh? Or maybe each of us could be invited on my day and their day respectively.....」(Liecia) 「I see. Then it isn't necessarily once per week, right?! As expected from Juna-dono.」

(Aisha) No, no, no, even Aisha and Juna-san also joined this topic!?

Simultaneously, right..... It wasn't that I was uninterested in it, or rather there was no male who COULD be uninterested in it, so for that reason I must inherit the throne. My realistic personality had an aversion to the hardships of the throne while on the other hand, I desired to pursue the goals of a man and, the needle scale on my heart was swaying from side to side.

At that precarious time, I staggeringly felt the urge to run away.

「You mustn't, nodesu! Hal, you absolutely mustn't nodesu!」(Nodesu Girl)[3]

「You know nothing about it!」(Hal)

From the faraway seats, I heard a quarrelling voice coming from a young boy and girl.

The quarrelling boy and girl wore the same Royal Military Academy uniform like us. The boy had red hair and was tall for a human. His height was about 190 cm. From the width of his blazer's shoulders, it was clear that he had a solid physique. The girl facing him had blond hair with a short bob cut, two triangle ears and was a petite girl. Was she from the Mystic Wolf Tribe?

「No, that girl is from the Mystic Fox Tribe[4].」(Liecia)

From what Liecia said, I understood that she was different.

「You can judge from the tail. It is a fox tail, right?」(Liecia)

「So I can't put them together as a Mystic Dog Tribe[5] since they belong to the same canine family?」(Souma) 「If you said that, then people from the Mystic Wolf Tribe and the Mystic Fox Tribe will get angry. Since, the Mystic Dog Tribe refers to Kobolds, it has the same feel of calling a human, a monkey.」(Liecia) 「..... Afterwards, please teach me the taboos among the races.」(Souma)

As a king, if I unintentionally violate the taboos when having an audience, it could cause an international problem.

As expected from another world, I didn't know where the landmines had been buried.

While I was thinking about this, the Mystic Fox Tribe girl shouted in grief.

「Hal, I beg of you desu. You mustn't go to the Carmine Duchy right now desu! The Army General Duke George Carmine[6] has enmity with the new king desu. There could be a civil war nodesu!」(Nodesu Girl) 「That's why I must go. If it becomes a battle, it could become my chance for my life's promotion.」(Hal) The youth of about 18 years old who was called Hal, laughed fearlessly.

The face of the Mystic Fox Tribe girl in front of him became downcast.

「Hal's concept of the war is too light, nodesu.」(Nodesu Girl)

「Kaede is worried too much.」(Hal)

「Hal's father is worrying for Hal so he asked you to return home, you know, nodesu!」(Kaede) 「My father had no relations with this! He was just a coward that secluded himself in the capital when the situation turned bad, even when he had served the Carmine House for many years. I don't need to hear his words!」(Hal) 「Hal's father had read the flow of the age, nodesu. The one who tried to oppose without any great cause was the Duke Carmine, nodesu」(Kaede) Those two kept quarrelling. Seeing both of them like this, Liecia with a plop, clapped her hands together.

「I thought that I had seen him before, he is Officer Hulbert Magna[7], I think.」(Liecia) 「So you know him, La..... Liecia」(Souma)

「The eldest son of the renowned Magna House of the Army faction who is said to have an outstanding talent that is unrivalled by anyone in terms of combat prowess since his days at the Military Academy. After graduation, he had been assigned to the army..... So, he came back home?」(Liecia) 「That fellow is unexpectedly famous. Then, what about the girl?」(Souma)

「Let see..... I never see her face in the army.」(Liecia)

「That girl is Kaede Foxia-san[8].」(Juna)

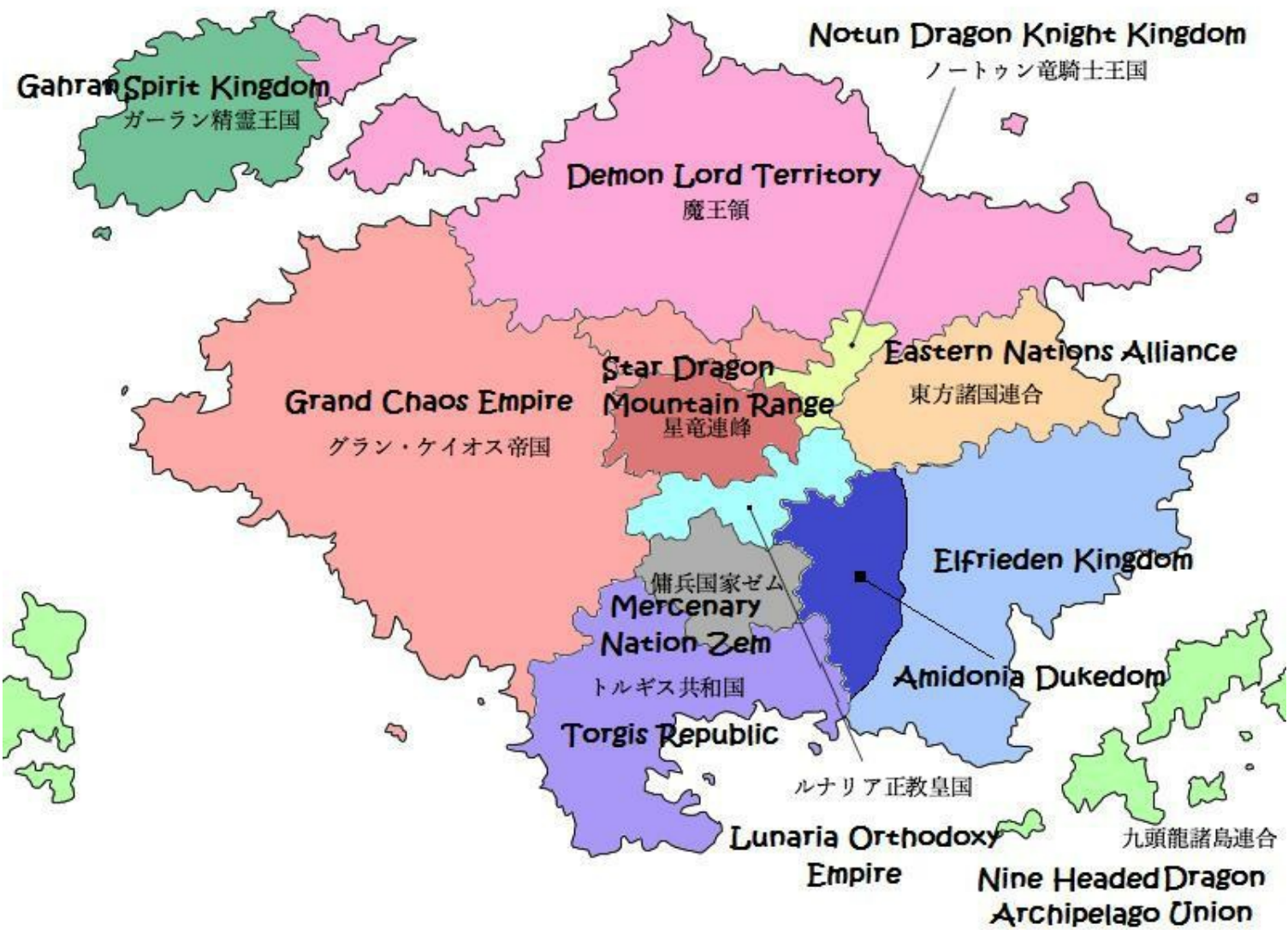
Juna answered instead of Liecia. Eh? How could you know her?

「Since that girl is a regular of this café. If I remember correctly, she was a magician attached to the Royal Army[9] (King's Personal Army).」(Juna) 「If she is in the Royal Army, then I wonder if she's a magician with the Earth attribute.」(Liecia) This world magic was divided into 6 attributes, Fire, Water, Earth, Wind, Light and Dark. Fire, Water, Earth, and Wind each respectively manipulated their element to use it as offensive magic. Light was the basis of healing magic. The one called Dark magic wasn't strictly about manipulating darkness, since special magic that couldn't be classified as the other 5 attributes was generically labeled under the 『Dark series』. My telekinesis or parallel thinking magic also was systematically referred to as Dark.

In case of magicians attached to an army, their deployment in the army depended on their attribute. Fire attribute in the Army, Wind attribute in the Air Force, Water attribute in the Navy, and Earth and Dark (although they were rare) attribute in the Royal Army. Light attribute had the same role as combat medics and were evenly deployed in all branches. Honestly speaking, I opposed this method of deployment that lacked flexibility, however the Army, Navy, and Air Force were all under control of the Three Dukes so I couldn't meddle in this. In the event that I had settled with them in the future, then I would absolutely perform a structural reform of this.

While I was thinking about this, Kaede and Hulbert were kept on quarreling.

「There no way Duke Carmain would lose to that inexperienced young king!」(Hulbert) 「These days Duke Carmain is strange nodesu! Even when the only one who receives profit from domestic antagonism were the surrounding countries. Amidonia had been aiming to recover their territories they lost to previous generation's King. The Torgis Republic that is mostly covered in permafrost[10] also wishes for fertile land. If it becomes a civil war, then they will certainly come to interfere. And it isn't the only thing that Duke Carmine didn't understand nanodesu.....」
(Kaede) Eh? That girl seemed to have a good understanding on the states of affairs in the surrounding countries.



On this world's map, to the west (I don't know whether it was the same thing with Earth's cardinal direction, but I used that expression in writing to made it easier to understand) of our country lies the 『Amidonia Dukedom』 where roughly half of their territories was snatched away by Elfrieden's previous generation's King's expansionist policy. 50 years had passed since then, however, even now they were eagerly waiting for their

chance to recover the lost territory. They were clearly a hostile nation to our country.

South from Amidonia, situated on the southern tip of the continent was the 『Torgis Republic』 that, just like what Kaede had said, was a country where the majority of their territory would be covered in frozen soil when winter came. Based on this world's map, the temperature would drop if one kept heading South. I don't know whether because this continent (if I had to say with Japanese sense) seemed to be located in the Southern Hemisphere, or if North and South were different from my perspective, or if it was the effect of a mysterious magical phenomenon, but if one went south in Elfrieden, it became colder and if one headed north it became hot.

With such national characteristics, the 『Going North Policy』[11] could be called the Torgis Republic's national policy. However, among the countries that share their national border with them, the Grand Chaos Empire was too powerful to make an enemy and the Mercenary Nation of Zem was an ally so it was also impossible. Because of this, their Going North Policy was focused onto Amidonia and Elfrieden.

Either country would take advantage of the breach in our country like a bunch of starving hyenas.[12]

「Those are the situation of the surrounding countries nanodesu! Despite this, what is Duke Carmine thinking nodesu?」(Kaede) 「..... Duke Carmine is different. He surely has thought of something.」(Hulbert) 「So Hal can't think for himself nodesu?」(Kaede)

「Of course I had already thought about it! Actually, I had heard that many nobles had given up on the king and hurriedly gathered their private troops under Duke Carmine command. Failing to secure their support was the proof of King's incompetence right!?」(Hulbert)

「We still don't know whether the King is capable or incompetent, he hasn't made any errors until now! Furthermore, the nobles that gathered under Duke Carmine were nobles, that I believe, were displeased by the new king's economic reforms snatching away their concession rights, or

had their properties seized after fraud investigation nodesu! By overthrowing the current King, they could restore their rights. Don't you think that this country has actually gotten better nodesu!?(Kaede) Kaede pressed Hulbert for answer, while Hulbert could only avert his eyes.

「..... Duke Carmain must have thought about something.」(Hulbert)

「Duke Carmain again, does Hal not have his own opinions nodesu!?(Kaede) 「Shu-Shut up! As if Kaede can foresee the future!」(Hulbert)

「I have understood it nodesu!」(Kaede)

Kaede clearly declared to Hulbert who defiantly spoke to her.

「Kaede has understood it nodesu! That person is scary. Towards the Three Dukes, the New King will...」(Kaede) 「Okay, Stop.」(Souma)

I interrupted Kaede's words while forcing my way in between both of them.

Those two stared in wonder at the sudden intruder. Disregarding the surprised Hulbert who said 「Wh-who are you, bastard!」, I smiled to Kaede who stared with her mouth agape.

「If you prattle on to much, you can be restrained by using the power of the state you know?」(Souma)

⓪ ⓪ ⓪ ⓪ ⓪ ⓪ ⓪ ⓪ ⓪ ⓪ ⓪ ⓪ ⓪ ⓪

So 3 slot had already been taken (Tomoe couldn't be included) and 5 Souma's harem slot still empty.... I wonder if it will be filled.

New Girl appeared... (No, she wasn't a harem candidate) also a new (idiot) character had arrived.

*

[1] Not really know how to translate this: 健康男子の女の子への誇大妄想なめんな. A healthy boy would feel delusions for girls?

[2] What do you call a king that reigning 2 generations before the current king?

[3] The new girl ends most of her sentence with nodesu. Or if it couldn't

be used, adds desu to the end of each sentences. Desu make the sentence more polite, but has no inherent meaning. (it literally means: something is/be, almost similar to English “is/be”) [4]妖狐族 : Youkozoku. 狐 means Fox

[5]妖犬族 : Youkenzoku. 犬 means dog in onyomi reading: Ken. Fun fact, Fox and Wolf belong to the same Family Canidae, hence Souma’s comment.

[6] ゲオルグ=カーマイン Georugu Kaamain

[7] ハルバート=マグナ Harubeeto Maguna

[8] カエデ=フォキシア Kaede Fokishia. Since Fokishia sounds like Fokushu (Fox) in Japanese, should I turned it to Foxisia? But based by the reader input, I turn it into Foxia . [Editor’s note: Probably. It is a Western style world after all!]

[9] 禁軍. Literally means Forbidden Troops (like Forbidden City). This is actually a term used to refer to honor bodyguards of China’s Tang Dynasty emperor and garrison of the Imperial capitals during its formation in the early 7th century that later became the only military force that remained under the control of the central authorities. Also can be translated as Imperial Troops. But since Elfrieden is not an empire, so Royal Army it goes...

[10] Permafrost. Refer to a regions where the ground is covered with frozen ice, like Siberia or Northern Scandinavia. In the summer, the upper layer of the soil thawed and can become a mudhell (that the summer grasses and plants exploited for their short growth period.) Seriously, I respect the Russian, the Nordic People, and all people that live in Arctic Circle!

[11] Just like Russia’s Warm Water Policy. Thank God for the global warming, right comrade? (Fun Fact if the Earth become 2 degree more warmer, the Siberia Plain could become the world grain basket region)

[12] Actually the actual Japanese said 虎狼 or like a Tiger and Wolf: with ferocious appetite. With greed. Like Hyenas. Like Vultures. Like wallet-sucking tax inspectors.

Chapter 4: Parnam Vacation Day F

Souma's Perspective

The girl with the fox ears seemed to recognize me immediately.

「! Y-you!?!」(Kaede)

「Yes, that's why I said quiet down. Good grief, I don't know how much do you understand, however if you say what you believe too much in this place, it might incur severe losses to this country.」(Souma) 「I-I am sorry. But, why are you in this pla-.....! You surely not are coming here to arrest the rebellious Hal!? You're wrong nodesu! Hal's head is weak so rebellion is.....」(Kaede) She took it the wrong way and then while misunderstanding the situation, began to make excuses. Where did her analytic ability that she showed before go? Kaede frantically kept on arguing vehemently for Hulbert's sake. It seemed that she..... loves Hulbert.

「Of course not. Since I have no interest in just one soldier.」(Souma)

「Th-then, what are you doing in this place?」(Kaede)

「Since I was suddenly asked to take a day off, I only came to take a look at Juna-san's store.」

「Is-is that so?.....」(Kaede)

Kaede immediately made a relieved expression.

As for Hulbert, he had been glaring in my direction for some time.

「You bastard[1], so you abruptly interrupted our conversation to threaten Kaede.」(Hulbert) 「U-um Hal? I wasn't threatened, you know.....」(Kaede)

「Annoying! Kaede, just be quiet!」(Hulbert)

「Hyau!」(Kaede)

Hulbert hit the desk with a bang and rose up with a menacing look and frightened Kaede.

「..... I think it was you who threatened her.」(Souma)

「I said shut up!」(Hulbert)

He reached out his hand to grab my collar,

「Ugh」(Hulbert)

But his hand stopped en route. From my point of view, I would have seen the sight of Hulbert who was immediately surrounded by three girls from my group.

Even though being surrounded by three beauties should have been a dreamy situation..... But I didn't envy him a bit. At any rate, Liecia unsheathed her rapier from her waist and pointed its tip at Hulbert neck, Aisha (she didn't bring her great sword since it's a hindrance) grabbed his face with an Iron Claw grip[2], while Juna-san stood behind him with a smile while pressing a fruit knife against his back. Whoaa... the girls in my group have too high of a fighting strength.

「But, why Juna-san, too?」(Souma)

「Because this store prohibits all kinds of violent behavior. (*smile*)」
(Juna) 「Ah, yes.....」(Souma)

As expected, faced with this situation, even the highly agitated Hulbert couldn't help his sweat from gushing out. Without being able to move even a muscle he could only glare with a mortified expression from between the gaps of Aisha's fingers.

「You bastard..... Let me go! Despite being a guy, you dare to hide behind a woman's back」(Hulbert) 「Even if you said that to me, it seems that my job requires me to be protected. Or rather, I think it would be a problem if I went into a public space without any bodyguards.」(Souma)

When I said this, the girls in my group nodded in affirmative.

「If you already knew about this, I wish you wouldn't poke your head into other people's affairs and cause trouble.」(Liecia) Liecia reprimanded me without pursuing it any further. Ah yes, I'm sorry. I'll be more prudent.

Hulbert's irritated scowl pierced me.

「.....Bastard, who the hell are you?」(Hulbert)

「Fumu..... Then let me answer you with number six of the top historical drama[3] lines that I want to say. 『(in Matsudaira Ken's[4] voice) Hulbert, hast thou failed to recognize mine face?』[5]」(Souma) 「Wha-?」(Hulbert)

「Why did you suddenly act so high and mighty?」(Liecia)

Liecia suddenly chopped into the conversation. Noo... Let me say it again.

Then Aisha was the one who spoke next instead of me.

「Hold your tongue! Don't you recognize who this gentleman is?!」(Aisha) Woah, that was just similar to the third top historical drama line that I want to say (by the way, the first position belongs to: if I was told 『Just you alone, what can you do?』, then I would turn it back with 『I'm not alone』), why did you have to say it!

「You are in the presence of the most august, the 24th Elfrieden King (Temporary), His Majesty Souma!」(Aisha) Blam I heard BGM playing, but that was just in my own imagination.

For the time being, I lightly hit the head of this disappointing dark elf.

「Your voice is too loud. Hadn't I said I'm travelling incognito?」(Souma) 「Ah.....Fo-Forgive me, Your Majesty.」(Aisha)

「Your Majesty?..... So, you can't possibly be the King?」(Hulbert) Hulbert only just now seemed to be surprised. I think that in this place, the only one who didn't know was just him, so he was quite a dolt. For now, if the rapier + iron claw + knife that surrounded him weren't withdrawn, the talk couldn't continue, so I asked everyone to stand down. But Aisha and the rest seemed to be openly displeased.

I turned my gaze to Hulbert who seemed to be relieved and began asking him.

「Well then, Hulbert Magna, do you intend to attack me?」(Souma)

「Th-That is.....」(Hulbert)

Hulbert averted his eyes. Hey, does this mean he resigned?

「Can I think of that as the consensus opinion from the Magna House?」
(Souma) 「Wha-! My old man had nothing to do with this!」(Hulbert)

「Is he really unrelated? Leaving aside the soldiers that should have abide to my rules, the ones who rebel against me and hold the rank of noble will be judged under the law. They even clearly showed the spirit of rebellion. In that case, it can be considered as 『High Treason』[6]..... It's a grave crime. At the very least, all the third degree relatives will be executed.」(Souma) 「Wha-.....」(Hulbert)

Hulbert became speechless. But, I was just throwing some hard reality in his face.

「That is.....that is too much.....」(Hulbert)

「Even if I say this, don't have a grudge against me. This is what the law of this country decided after all. I want to reform the law that punishes the even innocent babies, but alas, the current conditions have tied my hands from doing this. Maybe if the Three Dukes cooperated with me, then I could make the reforms. However, since I can't revise it, then if they were judged under it, I would have no other way to express it other than that they reaped what they had sowed.」(Souma) 「.....」(Hulbert)

「Hulbert Magna, you were born under the distinguished noble Magna House. That's why if you go to the Three Dukes' side and the Three Dukes raise a rebellion, then if I win, I will execute all your third degree relatives. After all, that's what the law had established, so I can't do anything about it, right?」(Souma) I was emphasizing that I was just making judgment following the letters of the law and I would not be just my personal lynching.

Machiavelli had said:

『If you asked between the Nobles and the People which one was easier to gain support from, then the answer is the People. After all what the People requested were only 「Protection」 from the Nobles's「Oppresion」. However, to protect the People means antagonizing the Nobles, and they might turn their blade against the Ruler. That's why a Wise King would

create a judicial branch, that restrained the Nobles with law and gain the support from the People, also avoiding the enmity of the Nobles since it wasn't the ruler himself that gave out the judgment.』

(Excerpt from De Principatibus Chapter IX (first half) and Chapter XIX (last half))It might sounds like a sophistry, but this was the Reality.

「Then, let's think what would happen if the Three Dukes win.』(Souma)
「! Th-That's right! If we win then there will be no problem!』(Hulbert) 「In that case, what will happen to this girl?』(Souma)

I put my hand on Kaede's shoulder. Hulbert's face then turned pale.

「You don't mean that you will take Kaede as a hostage?!』(Hulbert) 「It isn't about that you know. It's just that this girl belongs to the Royal Army. If the Three Dukes raise a rebellion, then she will be on "my side" and be sent to the front lines. In other words, she will become your enemy.』(Souma) Then I looked directly at Kaede.

「By the way, what is your relationship with Hulbert?』(Souma)

「Chi-Childhood friend nanodesu.』(Kaede)

「Childhood friend.....is it?』(Souma)

It wasn't just "only childhood friend". Since the beginning, from their speech and conduct, I could see a glimpse of their mutual feelings. Well, I wasn't that insensitive to point it out loud in this place. There was also nothing to gain from it.

「Well, as a childhood friend, then your "affection" to her is above average, right? Then if the Three Dukes' side wins, what do you think will happen to her?』(Souma) 「What will happen..... Nothing will happen.』(Hulbert)

「We are currently talking if the Three Dukes side win. Let's just say that I was attacked and the one who cut off my head was you.』(Souma)

「Humph! Then, surely I will be promoted and become successful.』

(Hulbert) 「.....That might be true, then what do you think will happen to Kaede at that time? Amongst the defeated soldiers, there is a cute girl. Then, what do you know about "The things a victorious soldier will do".....

Since you were once on active duty, you can easily imagine it, right?」
(Souma) When I pointed this out, Hulbert's face became visibly paler.

Perhaps he was imagining "those" scenes. After the war concluded, the winner would oftentimes trample the loser. Plunders, arsons, rapes, massacres..... To let these acts of brutalities be overlooked to such an extent, war was similar to an intoxicating narcotic.

Hulbert then shook off his hesitation and began rebutting.

「Duke Carmine thoroughly led his troops! They won't do such barbarous acts!」(Hulbert) 「I don't really knew about the Army's internal situations, however the troops that are currently in Carmine Duchy isn't a formal Army, since there are the idiots who are raising rebellions. After I seized their assets after investigating their corruption, those fellows have nowhere to go. If they lose, what awaits them is summary execution and familial extinction. That's why they flung away all their funds and employed a large amount of mercenaries from Zem.」(Souma) The Mercenary Nation Zem.

A medium sized nation located west of Amidonia, north of Torgis, originally it was a country that employed a mercenary captain named Zem. However, with his own quick wits, he overthrew the country and founded a nation of mercenaries. The country was advocating its 『Permanent Neutrality』, however, its chief economy revolved around dispatching mercenaries to many nations. To sum it up in other words 「If they are demanded, they can send their whole country as mercenaries」. Because those mercenaries were exceptionally strong, rather than making them into an enemy, all nations made mercenary contracts with them instead and gained them as an ally.

「That can't be possible! The Royal Army also employs mercenaries amongst its ranks! So if the Three Dukes also employed mercenaries, then won't it become friendly fire!?!」(Hulbert) 「Ah, it won't happen. Since the Royal Army had canceled their contract of employment quite some time ago.」(Souma) Since this was a good opportunity, let's talk about this country's military's organization.

The total military force of this country was about 100,000 men strong. It was organized further into: The Army led by Duke George Carmine[7]: 40,000

The Navy led by Duke Excel Walter[8]: 10,000

The Air Force led by Duke Castor Vargas[9]: 2,000

(However, it was said that one Wyvern Knight was equal to 100 foot soldiers.) Although the Air Force was organized so that every soldier held a Knight peerage at the least (It was usually composed of a team of 『1 Wyvern + 1 or 2 soldiers』 that will be referred together as the singular unit of 『Wyvern Knight』) the Army and the Navy were mostly composed of career soldier.[10] They always practice day and night in the Three Dukes' territory, and they received their pay that was provided by the Three Dukes' territory. It could be said that to support them, that the Three Dukes gave many privileges to them, like rights for self-autonomy or tax exemption for their field harvests.

Then, the last 40,000 belonged to the Royal Army, however their structure was complicated. The Royal Guards and the soldiers of the Royal Army under the direct command of the king were a career soldiers. Then, they were also added to the private armies of the nobles beside the Three Dukes (they didn't have privileges like the Three Dukes). Lastly the mercenary troops, which were employed from Mercenary Nation Zem under the command of the Royal Army, however this contract had already been annulled.

For the Royal Army to have fewer soldiers than the Three Dukes was the result of the doctrine of this country.

This country was a nation originally born from the mingling of different races. For that reason, since the King came from the humans that had the larger population, to protect the other races' privileges, it was decided that the leader of the Army, Navy and Air Force would be selected from other races. This system was established so that if a tyrant assumed the throne and began oppressing the other races, then the Three Dukes' armies that surpassed the Royal Army in number could expulse him. On

the contrary, it was also a system that if even one of the Three Dukes attempted to usurp the throne with just the help of one other Duke, it was possible for the King to subdue him.

Such arrangements might have worked out well if this was a peaceful era. However, currently with Demon King's Territory making its appearance, this was the age of strife where each country looked for a chance to get at each other. For the system with such disconnected decision makers, they might not be able to make any responses to an emergency situation. In reality, in spite of the fact that I wanted to continue with my reforms, the Three Dukes' opposition would give me many hardships.

So, let's return to the matter of me annulling the contract for the mercenaries.

「Wait a moment, what do you mean by cancelling the mercenaries' contract!？」(Lecia) 「Ah..... Now that you mention it, it looks like I hadn't said anything about it.」(Souma) I made a wry smile at the Lecia who became more surprised than Hulbert and yelled at me.

「Just like what I said. Mercenaries that only live for gold couldn't be of any use.」(Souma) Machiavelli had said, 『You cannot depend an army mixed with mercenaries.』. According to him, 『Since mercenaries are connected by the profits, if they are presented with a greater profit, they might easily turn their side against you. Even if there was a battle, rather than their employer, they would guard themselves more, so you couldn't expect loyalty or the like from them in the beginning. If the mercenaries are incompetent, then there would be no meaning in employing them, and if the mercenaries are competent, then they might use their wits to rob you of your position.』

(Excerpt from De Principatibus Chapter XII)

In fantasy novels or RPGs, it was oftentimes that the occupation of the main protagonist character was introduced as 『Mercenary』, however an actual mercenary's line of work was greatly different from those fantasy images. After all, these guys earn their living in the battlefield. It was a

work where they have no loyalty to neither a nation nor a ruler, they could switch sides after calculating loss and gain. If they lost the war, they would flee immediately, and if they won the war, they could rampage around. Although their maintenance cost may be cheaper than a standing army with same number, but in the long term, there was nothing but a minus.[11]

「We have no surplus money to pay such a useless bunch with gold, after all.」(Souma) 「That's why, by contracting the mercenaries we can get the security guarantee from Zem, you know!」(Liecia) 「It is surely a dangerous diplomatic position. However, wasn't it Liecia who said 『Even if we wager 1000 pounds of gold[12] for national defense, we wouldn't even give even one hair for tribute.』? Since Zem is different from the Empire, they have no capabilities to personally invade us. So there is no meaning to giving them tribute.」(Souma) Well, for this reason the mercenaries might take revenge by employing themselves to the Three Dukes' side.

I then looked directly at Hulbert.

「So those bloodthirsty mercenaries are in the Three Dukes' camp. Do you think they are going to leave a girl, like Kaede-chan, from a defeated army alone? The mercenaries would torment Kaede-chan, and after she had served her purpose, they would kill her. At that time, what kind of feeling will you have I wonder...」(Souma) 「That,.....」(Hulbert)

Hulbert wavered. Such an indecisive attitude gradually roused my anger.

「Hadh't you said that you will take my neck!? Didn't you want to sing out your victory!? Even when en route for this, you might find out that your childhood friend will tragically become a corpse after been completely played with by several men!?」(Souma) 「Gugh.....」(Hulbert)

I was shouting at him, and Hulbert collapsed and put both of his hands on the table.

He couldn't make any reply and his mouth was sewn up shut. Kaede-chan looked at his appearance with a worried look. Seeing her like this..... I more or less recovered my composure.

「Hulbert Magna. The decision you choose today will only lead you to a dead end. If I win, you will be executed. If the Three Dukes win then Kaede-chan will..... might not meet a peaceful end. This is a great gamble you can only do once in your lifetime, at least choose which table where your future is placed.」(Souma) 「.....」(Hulbert)

「Think about it thoroughly, before you do something rash. What do you really want? For what reason? For whose sake? Look around you and then think.」(Souma) 「For what.....For who.....」(Hulbert)

Hulbert looked around him.

There was Kaede-chan that was looking at him with eyes full of worry. Both of them looked at each other without saying anything, but Hulbert had an expression as if an evil spirit had been exorcised from him.

..... What will happen next would be for them to decide personally.

「Sorry Juna-san, for causing a disturbance in your business. We also need to leave.」

In the end, I apologized to Juna-san for the raucousness, however she calmly shook her head.

「There is no need for it. Your majesty's words have already been etched inside my heart.」(Juna) Then with an elegant bow, she saw us off.



「Hey Souma, I wanted to ask you something.」(Liecia)

「Hm? About what?」(Souma)

Inside the coach that was returning to the Royal Castle, Liecia who was sitting beside me began asking me.

Aisha acted as the coachman, so inside the coach was only us two.

「About the thing happened then: You was persuading Hulbert, right? It was unexpected since you said that you won't pardon those rebelling and you were somewhat serious.」(Liecia) 「.....Since he still hasn't officially rebelled against me. If he still rebels after this, then there will be no forgiveness.」(Souma) 「You are surprisingly kind.」(Liecia)

「Be kind to your friend, be stern to your enemy..... That is a king that can be supported by the people. That's why it doesn't mean that I like to act stern. The less enemies the better.」(Souma) 「Like what I thought..... You really are kind.」(Liecia)

plop Liecia put her head on my shoulder.

「Souma, don't overwork yourself.」(Liecia)

「I know.」(Souma)

「Ahahaha, that's true」(Liecia)

「But, I will need to work harder for only for a little bit more.」(Souma)
「.....Yes.」(Liecia)



When I arrived accompanied by Liecia and Aisha as the bodyguard at the audience room, there were three people already kneeling down. One of them, a middle aged man, was in front of the others and on his bowed head, streaks of white hair could be seen. From his figure clad in armor, it was safe to surmise that he had a long service in the military. Beside him were the two people that I had met yesterday, Kaede Foxia and Hulbert Magna. By the way, the man who bowed down his head ahead of these two people was the father of Hulbert, Glaive[13] Magna.

「The three of you may raise your heads.」(Souma)

「「Yes, Your Majesty.」」(Kaede)(Hulbert)

Hulbert and Kaede raised their heads. But my stare was fixed on Hulbert's face. After all, it was because there were so many marks from being hit on his face. His cheeks were swollen and his eyes were circled with blue. Because it wasn't there yesterday, then his injuries might have been inflicted after we parted ways with him.

「.....I see your face has become handsomer.」(Souma)

「Ugh.....Yes, Your Majesty!」(Hulbert)

Although he had a vexed expression, he didn't show any hostile attitudes like he did yesterday. I wonder what had happened after we left.

Then I called out to Glaive that still bowed down his head.

「Glaive Magna, you may raise your head.」(Souma)

「I humbly, humbly wished for Your Majesty's clemency for the recklessness of my son!」(Glaive) He replied with a sorrowful tone. His forehead nailed down the floor. Although I didn't really understand the way he was sitting on the floor in a one knee up posture; maybe this was similar to a dogeza in Japan.[14]

「The recklessness you mentioned, does it relate to yesterday's affairs?」(Souma) 「Yes, Your Majesty! I had heard the details from Kaede-dono. Nonetheless, he showed a conduct unbecoming of his professional duty, not only he had sent slander against Your Majesty repeatedly, moreover he even inexcusably asserted to participate in the Three Dukes' rebellion!..... However my son is still inexperienced and he has been referred to as one with an inadequate head. If Your Majesty has taken an offence by his conducts, please redirect that anger towards me who had neglected to adequately educate him!」(Glaive)Hmm..... What a lengthy speech. So what he said was 『Since I will receive the punishment, please spare my son's life.』 But in the first place, I didn't get angry at all.

「Yesterday I was travelling incognito, so I had no intention to take it as serious matters. After all, from what I have seen, he had received an appropriate punishment.」(Souma) 「Yes, Your Majesty! Your words are too good for me.」[15](Glaive) Lord Magna apologized by prostrating. Hulbert and Kaede also hurriedly bowed down once more.

I didn't get angry or anything, so to be apologized to was a bit too much..... and then Glaive raised his head.

「Thereupon Your Majesty, please pardon me for performing another impolite action.」(Glaive) 「.....What is it?」(Souma)

「This is... If it is possible, it would be better if the talk couldn't be heard by many people.....」(Glaive) So, a secret discussion? It was beyond doubt something similar to a historical drama.

Dismissing everyone in the room, there was only me, Liecia, Aisha, Hakuya, Glaive, Hulbert and Kaede remaining. Although it seemed

improper to let Aisha into these secret talks, she had to stay behind as my bodyguard. If the secret talk was just a deception and the real objective was to assassinate me, then it was expected that she could deal with it as well.

「The number of people has decreased. So, what is this talk about?」
(Souma) 「Yes. The subject of this talk is.....」(Glaive)

Glaive began to talk in depth.

Then, after hearing the contents of the talk, Hulbert opened his eyes widely, Kaede hung her head down and grasped her fist tightly, Hakuya closed his eyes, Aisha was nervous seeing everyone's expression.....Liecica didn't say anything and was nearly expressionless while her body stiffened. It was just, that lines of tears formed down her cheeks.

Speaking of me, I had a complex feeling. Anger, shock, resignation, sorrow, resentment..... Inside my chest, these emotions jumbled up, but I tried not to let them overwhelm me. Then as much as possible, I spoke out in a calm and even manner so that these emotions couldn't be perceived by others.

「By telling me this story, what do you expect from me?」(Souma)

「Nothing, Your Majesty. It is just I only desired for Your Majesty to be aware of it.」(Glaive) 「.....This is heavy.」(Souma)

Then I stood up and gave a decree to Kaede and Hulbert.

「Royal Army Affiliated Magician Kaede Foxia. Your insight is too good for just being only a magician, moreover it is dangerous. I appoint you as a staff officer under Commander Ludwin of the Royal Guard Knights.」
(Souma) 「Eh, what, yes Your Majesty!」(Kaede)

「Hulbert Magna of the Army. I command you to transfer to the Royal Army.」(Souma) 「!? Do you mean that I'll be in the Royal Army?」
(Hulbert)

「That's right. Support her as the adjutant to Kaede. Her position is essentially the number 2 in the Royal Army. Since she is still a young woman, she is liable to be looked down upon by her subordinates. If that

happens, it is your job to keep them in line. Isn't this good for you?」

(Souma) 「.....Yes, Your Majesty!」(Hulbert)

Thus a new young officer joined the Royal Army.

However there was no joy in his heart at becoming a new part of the force.

Pushing his vehement emotions, from his clenched mouth he only gave three words of his true feelings.

「That stupid bastard!」

ㇿ ㇿ ㇿ ㇿ ㇿ ㇿ ㇿ ㇿ ㇿ ㇿ ㇿ ㇿ ㇿ ㇿ

[1] Teme てめ in case you don't know. Teme is a very rude way to call another person.

[2] In professional wrestling, this refer to a grip that involves the attacker gripping the top of the head of the opponent with one hand and squeezing the tips of their fingers into the opponent's skull, thereby applying five different points of pressure. Also known as “Clawhold”. Just click “Von Erich” and “Iron Claw” in YouTube will net you a huge video catch.

[3] Jidaigeki. Usually a drama/action series taking up in Heian, Sengoku or Tokugawa Shogunate era.

[4] One of the most famous male actor in Japan. Known for his role as Tokugawa Yoshimune in Abarenbo Shogun [5] In Japanese, Souma use Yo 余 a formal first person pronoun, usually used by Royalty or Nobles in Japanese pop media. Also this line is from TV Series: Abarenbou Shogun... I try to search for this specific scene in Youtube... alas... It's like searching for a stripped kitten in LOLCat pictures...

[6] High treason is treason against the state. In UK, it is the crime of disloyalty to the Crown.

[7] ゲオルグ=カーマイン Georugu Kaamain

[8] エクセル=ウォルター Ekuseru Worutaa

[9] カストール=バルガス Kasutoru Barugasu

[10] Career soldier: Different from a conscript, career soldiers are people who choose to serve in the military until they retire. The so called professional army.

[11] Unlike games where recruiting mercenaries was expensive rather than recruiting normal unit (I see you Total War!), actual mercenary cost is cheaper since there is no cost that was needed to supply and to train the new recruits or give veteran or retirement benefits.

[12] It's an idiom for "Great Amount of Money"

[13] グレイヴ Guraivu. Either it Grave (grɛv) or Glaive (glɛv). Glaive sounds cooler I think. [Other name candidate: Griff [grɪf]. or Greffe [grɛf]] [14] Dogeza. Ultimate Japanese weapon. Use with precautions.

[15] Glaive ends most of his sentence with degozaimasu. This is a very polite formal form to end a sentence in Japanese. And what with the very formal choice of words... geez...

Interlude 2: Duchess Ecksel Walter's Sigh

Let's talk about this country's feudal system.

The social ranks in this country, excluding the royalty and the Three Dukes, were divided into three major castes: <Nobles and Knights>, <Commoners>, and <Slaves> ("refugees", being non-citizens, aren't categorized as any of these). Slavery needs to be explained on another occasion, but what distinguishes <Nobles and Knights> from <Commoners> is "whether or not they own land". Thus, the <Nobles and Knights> came to be called <Lords> and the <Commoners> living on their lands are called the <Populace> (<Slaves> are not included since they count as private property). <Lords> have all kinds of rights with regard to their territory but on the other hand, they bear a duty to serve on the country's military.

<Nobles and Knights> come upon their titles and land by inheritance, but there are cases where those among the commoners that had performed a distinguished service were granted land and a title and became a <Noble or Knight>. If their deed was in the field of domestic affairs they would become nobles, and if military then they would become knights. Otherwise, it is also possible to marry into a <Noble or Knight> family (in this case, land is split and given to them). This particular case is referred to as <New Nobles or New Knights>. While in truth there was no distinguishing between them, hardheaded folks call them "upstarts that weren't born Nobles or Knights". <New Nobles and Knights> titles can be inherited, and after about three generations they are recognized as new Houses.

On the other hand, <Noble or Knight> ranked people who commit a crime might be demoted to <Commoners> or <Slaves> depending on the magnitude of those crimes. In this case, lands and titles granted by the state is forfeit and the entire family of the criminal had their statuses demoted. This is referred to as [The Crushing]. The fact that the <Nobles and Knights> distinguish themselves from the <New Nobles and Knights> was probably because of pride that they were able to maintain their

statuses for over three generations without getting [Crushed].

Now those <Nobles and Knights> are not required to govern their own lands themselves. <Knights> in particular have to spend most of the year serving in the army, so management of their lands is entrusted to someone of their house. This also applies to the Royal Guard Captain Ludwin Arcus. Among the <Nobles> too, there were those who likewise entrusted territory management to someone of their house, took up residence in the Royal Capital Parnam, and worked in important posts like senior internal bureaucrats or chairmen of the National Assembly. They are called the <Royal Capital Nobles>, the former Prime Minister (current Shichuu) Markus was one of them.

However, the number of these <Royal Nobles> had decreased to only half of what they were last year. The missing people were those who were found guilty of corruption when Soma did his government spending review. The people charged with crime left their posts at the Royal Capital and was under house arrest in their territories. Those whose crimes were light had to pay back the embezzled amount and resign their family headship to someone else but their houses were allowed to continue. However, those with heavy crimes were forfeit of everything they own and was [Crushed].

Of course, the kind of people who would commit corruption wouldn't abide with the [Crushing] order willingly, but gather their private armies and assets and escape. However, having expected that line of reasoning, Prime Minister Hakuya had already blockaded the borders, and they were unable to take their assets outside the country. Being unable to stay in their territories nor leave the country, they ended up turning to the Carmine Duchy. Under Georg Carmine who was opposed to the King, they lay and wait for their chance.

¹ «TN: it's Georg with a hard 'G' (as in 'game', not 'gem'), hence 'Georg' and not 'George', like in 'Georg Cantor'»



The central city of the Carmine Duchy, [Randel].

It was inferior when compared to the Royal Capital Parnam, but it was large-scale compared to any other city, and only here there was enough people to be a city-state. The castle of the Army General Georg Carmine was here, and the city was developed as that castle's castle town. It's just that the generations of Army Generals were not too proactive regarding city administration, so unlike the Royal Capital that was bustling in accordance with the King's policies, the scenery here is that of a nostalgic cityscape that hasn't changed since a hundred years ago. It can be compared to Kyoto or Nara in Japan.

There was a coach stopped on a street corner in this Randel. In the coach was a blue-haired young beauty in her mid-twenties. She had the looks that would unmistakably make men sigh in admiration were they to see. She had a voluptuous body line that were visible over her Japanese kimono-like formal clothing. Only the reptilian tail extending from the buttock of her clothes and the small horns protruding from her blue hair indicate that she's not a human being.

From inside the coach, she attentively listened to the hustle and bustle of the city. She was close to a tavern. The noises of drunkards grumbling over their drinks were heard.

[Sheesh, what's the deal with that new King what does he think we are ... hic]

[Right. We're the ones who's been supporting the country for years and years]

[And that King, he thought squat about all that, and just ruled however he wants!]

[Why did King Alberto turn the country over to that whippersnapper...]

[And his retainers too, you know! All of them, youngsters with no experience! What's with that gloomy black bastard! What's with that fatass!]

[Heh heh heh, anyhow, he's probably just putting up bootlickers]

[Yeah, like any greenhorn would! After tossing out those of us with

experience and only listening to bootlickers, that king's not going to last long!]

[That's right! Let's take back the country from that fake king with our own hands!]

[Yeah! For our beloved motherland!]

[[[For our beloved motherland!]]]

(For the motherland, huh.... that's really, self-seeking of them)

The girl in the coach sighed. Each and every one of her movements alluring.

(You're the ones who's been betraying the country with your corruption. Then when you're judged for them all, you ran, and had the gall to say the king tossed you out. And the king putting up bootlickers? Didn't you see the personnel gathering? That king would even put up people that dislike him as long as they have the talent. Both Hakuya-dono and Poncho-dono were put up because of what they are capable of. The reason he didn't use you is simply because you're useless)

(It's been a few months since His Majesty Soma took over the Kingship but he hadn't made outstanding mistakes, nor lost the people's support, either. In fact, he solidly resolved the grave food problems, now that can be called a unique ability. I'm amazed at King Alberto's keen eye, I can't think of why I would go "why that greenhorn")

She rested her elbows on the window sill and propped her chin up with her hands.

(So the proud nobles from the founding of the country have fallen this far ... The Founder must be rolling in his grave)

Though she looked about thirty years of age, she remembered her compatriots from the dawn of the country five hundred years ago, and made a sorrowful smile. As one with sea serpent blood, it would be another five hundred years before she could return to their side.

"It's times like these that's hard on those of us long-lived ones, even

though I'm supposed to be used to farewells with the short-lived, I had to see what I would rather not. I really envy 'you all' who could die saying [Like I'd know what happens after I die]"

The Admiral of the Navy Ecksel Walter, said so as she smiled in self-derision.

[Lady of the Sea]

A voice called from outside the coach and Ecksel straightened herself up.

"... what is it?"

[Aye, a report came in from 'Canaria']

"Show me"

[Aye aye. It's here]

The letter was handed through a gap in the coach. Ecksel took and opened it and scanned her eyes over the contents. As she continued reading, she finally broke into a smile.

(Seems she's doing well over there... There are lots of places where the words are like she's talking about her lover, though I'm having mixed feelings there)

Ecksel froze the letter in her hand with a breath and let it out of her hold. The moment the frozen letter fell and hit the floor it was smashed into pieces.

(Let me correct myself. Living so long is not that bad at all. Though I had to see what I would rather not, I can also see a new light I never expected. 'You all' who have died can't enjoy anything like this can you?)

Serves you right.

Ecksel smiled like a little girl with not a speck of her age showing through.

Chapter 5: Rome was Born on the Sounds of Hammers A

Inside Parnam Castle, Royal Audience Chambers.

A crowd of people are now kneeling here in the place that was used for hero summoning and the talent awards ceremony. They were this country's financial bureaucrats. They all looked worn-out. Sunken cheeks, dark circles below their eyes, and dry smiles, some of them even looked like they'll collapse at any moment. Yet despite all that they all had eyes shining bright, those were the eyes of warriors that had survived a carnage.

They all survived through the agonizing present. When the kingship changed and the reforms for the finances that were on the verge of bankruptcy began, they became workhorses of the new King. Those among the bureaucrats that abused their positions to fill their own pockets were dismissed, leaving only the honest people, so they frantically worked, even forgoing sleep. Some of them compared numbers in documents all day long, some spent the whole day on horseback going to each and every place making sure the budgets are properly used.

They just about only return home to sleep, nay, they spent their days not returning home but sleep in the castle's nap room, and once they wake up they would tackle their work immediately. There are those who have families. There are those who have children. There are those who were newly wed. The time they could've spent with family they cast those away and continued working. They turned their backs on their wives, dissatisfied with their putting priority on work. They turned their backs on the faces of their children, lonely from their not playing with them. They turned their backs on their new wives earnestly worrying for them. This is the time, they said as they eagerly worked.

Solely in order to save this country from bankruptcy.

Solely in order to protect their loved ones living in this country.

Right now, I was sitting on the throne, lording over them. The color of my face was probably not too different to theirs. Unlike them, my unused consciousnesses could take turns resting, but even so, because of my workload that was five times the norm I feel like my soul had been worn down, not to mention my body. I practically haven't had any proper rest since the date at the Royal Capital.

“Everyone, you have a good look on your faces”

As I stood up, I calmly addressed them all. I then stepped down to them and rested my hand on a skinny man.

“A good expression, like a ghoul with hollow eyes”

[.....]

“I know that you all spared your sleeping hours, that you fought with numbers all day long, that you shrugged your loved ones off and came to the castle these past days. You all are precisely the ones who are fit to be our country's treasure! Be proud! For every bit of your souls you scraped away, that many of our country's people was saved!”

[UOOOOOOOOOOOOOOHHHH!!!!]

These lanky and pale people whom anyone can see to be indoor-type people, raised war cries like barbarians and stood up all at once. They raised their fists and clamored [King Soma! King Soma]. I waited for their fervor to settle down a little and continued my speech.

“We were able to secure funds thanks to your labors. Now the project [Veneti Nova] can begin in earnest. The complete settlement of the country's food problems is the dawn of this project. This was all because of you performing your duties, restoring the economy that was in dire straits, and raising funds! On behalf of the people, allow me to thank you!”

[King Soma!] [King Soma!]

“You have all done a thankless task for the country! This was not the kind of job that would go down in history. Even so, you have all saved more lives than a hero saving the day on a battlefield. For that, I, Soma

Kazuya, will remember you for all my life! It is you who are the nameless heroes!”

[Glory to King Soma!]

[Glory to King Soma and to Elfrieden!]

“You all did a job well done, and so you must be rewarded. I will give you five days off starting tomorrow! Go back to your families, rest your bodies and restore your strength!”

[UUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUHHHHHH!!!!]

That was the loudest cheer today. I know that feeling. They were all starved for rest. Sorry for doing black business¹.

¹ «TN: Employee abuse»

“I would normally have given you bonuses, but using the money you painstakingly raised would be putting the cart before the horse. I deeply apologize”

[.....]

“In return, I have consulted with the prime minister and would allow you to take one bottle each of the finest liqueur from the castle’s wine cellars! Raise a toast, or sell it for money! Do whatever you like!”

[UUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUHHHH! King Soma! King Soma!]

I smiled in satisfaction seeing the bureaucrats explode in joy. However, only Liecia who was watching the outcome next to me was....

[.....]

... being creeped out by the scene.

◇ ◇ ◇

“Soma... you must be tired”

“Not gonna deny that”

Upon returning to the government office, Liecia thoughtfully said so to me. Yeah, well ... that tension was really something. Thinking back, I only

got through it by some chance.

“I’ve been working until close to dawn. I was going to turn to ash from lack of sleep”

I answered, laying down as usual on my exclusive use bed laid down on a corner of the government office. Hakuya kept saying “It doesn’t need to be luxurious but please get a room for yourself. It’s strange for a country’s representative to sleep in the government office” until he’s blue in the face, but I don’t want to lose the convenience of being able to work straight after getting up, so I left it as is. I would probably sleep here at least until the political situation calms down a bit.

Liecia sat down on the bed next to where I was laying down to sleep. A pair of smallish well-shaped buttocks suddenly appeared before my eyes so I spontaneously turned away. Liecia was wearing a military uniform straight out of [Rose of Versailles] (with snug-fitting panties underneath), so her waistline was clearly visible. Which reminds me, for being a “princess” I don’t recall ever seeing her in a dress. The fact that because I received the crown she couldn’t get the throne and her status becoming up in the air probably had something to do with it.

“You made your consciousness take turns resting didn’t you?”

“Eh, ah ... I guess. But I was just about able to gather a little more of the needed budget for the grand project so I made my consciousnesses work in full swing”

As I said that much, Liecia sighed.

“I know you work hard, but please don’t make me worry”

“You were worrying?”

“Of course I was. There’s no replacing you”

“If it comes to that ... you can just summon someone else as a hero, right?”

“You idiot! Don’t say anything more or you’re getting a slapping”

I turned my head suddenly to face Liecia. As I looked up I saw Liecia

getting seriously angry.

“If we summoned another hero, that person wouldn’t be Soma. I want Soma”

“O, kay...”

“Remember this. I want Soma to be king. I don’t want any other king. If father told you to return the throne I’ll fight him for you”

She said something amazing so seriously I could only nod. I somehow ... caught a glimpse of the Gutsy Mother² in her. Seems like she’s going to be a good bride. The fact that I was a husband candidate still didn’t exactly register with me, though. For now, Liecia seemed to assent to my reaction.

² «TN: a late 60s TV series»

“So? You said something about budgets what are you using it for?”

“Ah, I was thinking I’d build a town for now”

“Town?”

I asked Liecia to fetch me a map of the country from my work desk and pointed at the joint of the letter < that this country’s territory resembles.

“I’ll build a bay town here. Meanwhile, I’ll be proceeding with road constructions. If I could maintain transport routes from the bay town to every other place I could control both maritime and land transportation. This should smooth out the circulation of goods. Honestly, I don’t get why you didn’t use such a good location. If things were more peaceful I’d have wanted to put the capital there”

“If things were peaceful?”

“Port towns are vulnerable to bombardment, right?”

“Ah...”

The capital relocation has to wait until things get more peaceful than it is currently. Anyway, northeast of it there was one of the three dukes, the Navy Admiral Ecksel Walter’s duchy’s port town [Lagoon City]. Right now

it is the country's biggest trading port but at the same time it was a naval base, with battleship docks. It was bad balance, with ports where goods from all over the world go coexisting with the naval base where secrecy is needed. Trading tends to get stopped whenever there's an emergency.

With that in mind, building of a new town with a trading port becomes urgent business.

"This bay town will be the country's heart, and the transport routes will be its veins. If circulation is smooth then if the north has a shortage of some goods, it can be transported from places in the south that has it in excess. Do you know what this means?"

"Umm ... you make a killing by buying up goods where the prices have gone down because of oversupply and resell it where prices have hiked because of high demand ... I guess?"

"Liecia, what are you, a merchant?"

"I was wrong?"

"Why are you ripping off the people we want to enrich ..."

Well if this was [Tai○○○ Risshiden]³ or if we were talking foreign trade she would be correct.

However, since we're talking domestic trade, we have to think like a country rather than individuals.

³ «TN: Taikou Risshiden»

"Sure, there will initially be merchants making a killing doing that, but eventually the shortage of goods will decrease, the balance between supply and demand will be restored, and the high prices will gradually drop. This way, prices all throughout the country will even out, which means ..."

"You can buy things that were previously too expensive to get your hands on?"

I nodded, satisfied with Liecia's answer.

"Right now, the thing in highest demand in this country is foodstuffs.

It's urgent to maintain distribution routes in order to ensure a steady supply of it. In addition, over half of this country's border is on the sea. We have marine products in abundance. If we can take that inland we can solve the food problem in one go"

"We can take salted and dried stuff even now, can't we?"

"Okay, so you want to eat salted and dried foods every time you eat? I know I'll get tired of it"

"Well I see"

Dried mackerel and stuff do taste good but I don't think I want to eat it all the time. Since it's salted (and it's the salt that has antibacterial properties) one can't change the taste if one gets tired of it. In the first place, there's not much else to do to "quick-spoiling" fish than drying it. Which is exactly why it's important to be able to bring "raw fish" inland as soon as possible.

"And that's what the transportation network is for, right"

"That's right. well then"

I rolled over to sleep on the bed and closed my eyes.

"Get a little sleep. Let's go to the planned town construction area together when you get up. Ludwin's gone ahead and began advance work already, got to go and pay him a visit ..."

"All right. Good night Soma"

"Yeah, goodni....!?"

I felt something warm and soft on my cheek. When I opened my eyes in surprise I only saw the back of Liecia who was running outside. Ah ... s, so this is a goodnight kiss ... I, I guess. I suppose it's not strange in a western-type place. Can't be helped then. My heart's getting this restless because I don't go out with girls much, there's got to be a limit to being unimmunized⁴. Yeah, I'll be fine, it's normal, it's normal. Nothing special. Even Liecia probably did it casually. No deep meaning to it. Probably. Maybe.

⁴ «TN: There's got to be a limit to being in denial»

.....

It should go without saying that I couldn't get a wink of sleep in the end.



Chapter 5: Rome was Born on the Sounds of Hammers B

When I previously talked about how this country's technology is weird, I mentioned that [they have steel battleships but they were pulled by gigantic sea dragons], I wonder if you remembered. The thing that greeted Liecia and I when we reached the planned new town construction site was such a steel battleship.

Battleship [Alberto]

She was the sole war vessel of the Royal Guard, named after the previous King¹, and was the flagship of the Royal Navy. In appearance, she resembled the flagship of the Combined Fleet during the battle of Tsushima², the [Mikasa]. She had one of her main batteries each on the front and back for a total of four cannons, and secondary batteries along her sides. The differences are the fact that because she doesn't have internal combustion engines there were no smokestacks on her and the main and secondary batteries were not fixed guns but were simply cannons loaded on board. Normal vessels were pulled by one sea dragon (they look like plesiosaurs but with short and stout necks and goat-like horns on their heads) but this one was pulled by two.

¹ «TN: um, yeah, ships named after men do still get referred to as “she”»

² «TN: aka. 日本海海戦 – the battle of the Sea of Japan»

This is a good chance, so let me explain this country's technological unbalancedness.

Overall, it was at the technological level of the middle ages prior to the Industrial Revolution so it might be strange for a modern-era-ish battleship like this to be here. However, because of the power of magic in this world and the existence of strange creatures, what had been impossible was possible.

Even metal ships could float on water if they're shaped to take the buoyancy force into account, and it should have been possible on Earth in

the Middle Ages, too. The reason none were made until after the Industrial Revolution was that the mechanism with which to move them did not exist. In an age where the only means for propelling ships were sails to catch wind or oars to row with, there was no point to building metal ships that were more expensive than wooden ones and can't navigate deep ocean waters.

However, in this world there are Sea Dragons powerful enough to pull metal ships. By training them and attaching them ocean navigation became possible. Therefore they made metal ships.

The cannons loaded on the warship were the same.

Gunpowder already exists in this world. This in itself was not particularly strange. Even in the history of Earth there were traces of evidence of gunpowder before black powder made its entry as one of the Three Great Inventions of China³. There was an account that during the era of the Annals of the Three Kingdoms in the second century AD that the defenders of the fort of Chenchang⁴ assaulted Zhuge Liang's troops with gunpowder weapons (probably firecracker-like weapons).

³ «TN: it's supposed to be four great inventions IIRC: gunpowder, paper, printing, compass»

⁴ «TN: I think I might have to start learning Chinese...:/ »

However, matchlocks didn't exist in this world. Guns were not developed because they had long distance attack methods by simply launching magic. Where guns would shoot out a single bullet, earth-type magicians could fire multiple stones like a shotgun, fire-type magicians could rain down an attack not unlike a napalm bomb strike, wind-type magicians can launch cutting winds from an incredible range, and water-type magicians can, despite being short-ranged, use hydraulic pressure to tear down obstacles. In fact, bows and arrows are more effective because they can be shot at a high angle to counter earth magicians making protective walls out of earth, and can be enchanted with magical attributes.

However, cannons exist, but their use is limited to the navy. They were

developed as a long-range attack method because magic other than water-type is severely limited on the water.

They say that the magic in this world causes all sorts of phenomena by adding unique waves fired by people to the mana existing in the atmosphere. This mana (darkness excepted) also has five attributes, and the content of each in the atmosphere vary greatly depending on terrain. Put simply, deserts contain a lot of fire mana making water magic difficult to use. On the other hand, when water mana is abundant fire magic is weakened.

Because of that, during naval battles fire magicians would be weakened because of a lack of fire mana, earth magicians would have no earth to manipulate, wind magicians can't damage steel ships with their cutting wind, and water magicians don't have the range. Well, since they can do things like using water currents to run ships, water magicians are assigned to navies. For that reason cannons were developed as a means of attack. In the end, technology develops because there is a need for it.

Let us return to the topic, to the battleship Alberto. The Alberto is the sole flagship belonging to the Royal Guard, so

“Like I said, what do you mean to do with just a single flagship...”

It is because of destroyer or cruiser escorts that battleships and carriers can show their power. Just a single battleship is a paper tiger, a scarecrow.

“Well, you see, the assumption is that she will be mobilized together with the Navy”

“Then you should've just left her to the Navy, you can reduce costs that way...”

“Well ... we need to keep face”

Liecia's reply seemed sad. No matter how you look at it she's a white elephant.

“B, but you can use her to transport materials, right”

“I suppose ...”

We were using this uselessly big ship to carry materials for the building of the bay town. She had a considerable carrying capacity once you take her weaponry out. We were thus able to transport the materials several times faster compared to carrying them overland when no transport routes had been established.

“But in that case, it would’ve been more efficient if you made her a transport ship to begin with”

“Sheesh! Don’t be so negative!”

“I’ve been fighting with budgets until now, you see. It just came to mind when I see costs”

It would’ve been good if she were more easy to use, but I guess this is it.... Then, Aisha came along from the other side accompanied by Ludwin.

“Your Highness, I’ve summoned Ludwin-dono”

“Your Highness, and Milady Princess, too. Welcome to the new town construction site”

The good-looking Royal Knights Captain Ludwin Arcus said thus and saluted with a smile. He used to always wear silver-colored armor in the royal castle, but he was in relatively rougher garb here. He was wearing a white shirt and a leather vest, giving him the air of a good looking pirate sailor.

I threw the Royal Guard into the town construction. Of course, I did employ lots of workers from the engineering and construction guilds, but given the scope of the work that isn’t enough. Which is why I thought to throw in the Royal Guard and clear things up in one go using a human wave attack. In actuality, because of the [Royal Guard Combat Engineering Program] they were able to do some public works themselves. Although, the Royal Guard that was stationed here was only two tenths of their total number, with the remaining eight tenths establishing transport networks to every city.

“So then, how is the project progressing?”

“We’ve already marked the area off. The work is proceeding ... or it should be, but...”

“Did something happen?”

Since he said it evasively, I asked, and Ludwin smiled bitterly.

“There’s this troublesome old man ...”



[That’s why I told you to stop building!]

[Listen up here gramps. This town’s being built on orders of the king!]

[I’m telling this for the good of the king! You can’t build a town here!]

[You don’t understand, do you gramps. We’re not telling you to leave the place]

[You’re the one who’s not getting it!]

The sound of a quarrel was heard from the new town construction office tent.

Well, rather than quarrel, it was more of an old man one sidedly yelling his lungs off.

I asked Ludwin.

“So there’s this old man who’s been living here who’s violently opposed to the new town construction?”

“Yes. A local fisherman by the name of Urup”

“... Even though I said to not force people out of their land?”

“Of course. We recruit from citizens to begin with, so the locals can live here as they were, we don’t even charge rent. We also plan to rebuild homes when we had to rearrange things”

“Sounds like there’s nothing to complain about”

Like Aisha said, there’s nothing to complain about. As far as I can see there’s nothing here but poor fishing villages. It should be difficult to live in a remote place like this. If the town was built, the difficulty will go

down along with the influx of a large number of people. To not be chased out of such a prospective location and even have homes built for them, I wonder what he's complaining about.

"Then what part is that man rejecting"

"That is ..."

[I told you, you shouldn't provoke the Sea God's wrath!]

Another angry roar came out from the tent. Sea God?

"Well, he's angry because he says we're building homes on the Sea God's domain"

"Sea God? So there's a Sea God here in this world?"

I asked Liecia and the others, but they all shook their heads.

"Never heard of him"

"I don't know either"

"Probably just an old man's tale, I think"

None of them knew anything of a Sea God.

[Never heard of a Sea God before. Stop obstructing construction just because of a weird religion]

[Not a religion! The Sea God really exists! If you build on the Sea God's domain you will provoke his wrath and be destroyed! Actually, the Sea God rages once every hundred years!]

Hm?

[When I was a lad the Sea God raged once. That time, the people who built homes on the Sea God's domain were all swallowed by the sea]

That is

I entered the tent.

Inside there was a young Royal Guard Soldier and a sun-tanned old man wearing a headband.

"Hey old man. Can I hear that story in more detail?"

“The hell are you? I’m talking to him”

“A, ah, Your Highness”

“Your Highness!?”

The soldier quickly did a standing salute while the old man went into a panic.

“Howdy. I’m Elfrieden’s temporary King Soma Kazuya”

“... I’m ... Urup”

I asked for a handshake and Urup tensely responded.

With the handshake concluded, I immediately went for the main issue.

“So, old man. What’s that story about just now?”

“! T, that’s right! Your Highness, I beg of you. Please stop building homes on the Sea God’s holy ground”

“To even spout such drivel to the King ...”

“No, let’s hear it”

I motioned the soldier to stop with my hand.

“Tell me that story in more detail”

“O, of course”

I then received the folklore of this land from the old man.

It seems this land originally belonged to the Sea God, but he was defeated by the God of the Land and it was lost. However, the Sea God still seems to consider this land his own, and whenever someone comes and build homes here, they would all be destroyed without a trace. Which is why the surrounding fishing villages decided not to build homes here.

Hearing the old man’s story Liecia and Aisha...

“Too obscure, I don’t get it”

“It’s useless just hearing about it, huh”

They were appalled, but that’s not the case with me. I had Ludwin

prepare me a map along the way, and thoroughly questioned the man just which parts are the Sea God's domain. Then I squeezed down the 'Sea God's holy ground' to some extent and while looking at the map, I told Ludwin.

"We're making big changes to the city plan"



"Wait a minute Soma. What are you saying all of a sudden!?"

"Your Highness can't seriously be believing what that old man said?"

"If we change the plans now it'll cost us quite a lot of time, you know?"

Liecia, Aisha, and Ludwin each said so.

I understand. I don't want to do something this troublesome, either.

But I have to do this for the sake of the new town's peace.

"Soma, you can't really believe that the Sea God exists?"

"Nah, he probably doesn't"

"Then why ..."

"Liecia, folklores are people's memory"

I said, pressing my temples.

"Folklore is something handed down over generations. So why is it handed down? The reason is that the preceding generation judged that it was necessary to. Something without value won't be retold to the next generation. If it is handed down then it must contain some [moral] or [life wisdom] in it"

"You're saying this curse of the Sea God is the same?"

"Yeah. The [moral] of this story is to 'not build homes at a specified location', and 'if you build a house there the people of the house will be destroyed without a trace' ..."

I then looked straight at the old man Urup.

"... with a tidal wave, right?"

Old man Urup opened his eyes wide. He suddenly trembled all over.

“T, that’s right! It was a tidal wave! The people who built houses over there were all washed away in their homes!”

“And was there a big earthquake right before the tidal wave?”

“H, how did you know!?”

Old man Urup said, looking like he just remembered it now. It might have been because the fact that the people and the houses were washed away was too shocking that it was sealed in his memory. Which is why he could only abstractly say that the houses were destroyed by the wrath of the Sea God. A Japanese who had experienced the eastern Japan quakes and saw the scenes of tsunami on the news countless times knew painfully well how he feels.

“The true nature of the wrath of the Sea God is a [giant tidal wave caused by a submarine earthquake]”



Even on Earth, it was only recently that the mechanism behind earthquakes was explained to some extent.

Even that had to wait until the twentieth century when the Earth’s internals were explained. Until then, even if one were to personally experience the phenomenon called an earthquake, one would say that the cause of it was [because of volcanic activity] or [because an underground cavity caused by evaporation in waterways had collapsed] or such. Even being able to come to that conclusion was good, when religion comes into the mix, it became stories like [the squirming of the evil ones beneath the earth], though in Japan, it was just a large catfish.

For that reason, it was a phenomenon that this world, estranged from science as it is, was unable to explain.

Having to explain it is a huge pain in the rear.

“Like I said, in this world there are places where [the continents are being formed] and where [the continents are being submerged⁵], and the

place where they are submerged is where a continent gets piled on top of another, and one of the submerging continents would roll down and the other would be bent and strained. In order to ease the strain on the bending continent it needs to slide over or snap and the tremor it causes is called an [earthquake], but ...”

⁵ «TN: The actual term is subduction»

I explained with both my hands in a pose like a news programme’s earthquake report and a drawing of [a plate slipping beneath another plate] I saw all too much, but everyone’s eyes were all over the place.

“..... doesn’t look like you’re getting it, huh”

“Ummmm...”

“Continent? Tremor? Are you talking about magic Your Highness?”

“I completely don’t get it, either. You need to study at the Royal Academy for something that advanced or ...”

Not a single person understood. The times hasn’t reached up to that point so it’s not too much.

“Fine, so never mind about the mechanism. Anyway, when those earthquakes happen under the sea they often cause tidal waves. In other words the [Wrath of the Sea God] old man Urup was talking about was not something that happened because someone built houses on the holy ground, but was something that happens periodically”

“What ... so it happens even if nobody built houses?”

Old man Urup widened his eyes.

I traced the country’s coastline on the map and showed.

“Incidentally, this country’s coastline bends like the letter < and this place goes where the letter bends. This kind of place receives more tidal wave damage than others. The reason would be ... too hard for you to understand even if I told you so just think of it like that”

“O, okay ...”

Preferably I'd have made a miniature of the coastline and poured water towards it, then showed what happens when the wave subsided. This will probably get them to understand, but it's a lot of work. Let's do that later.

"But if it's that dangerous a place then isn't it too dangerous to build a town on?"

Being pointed out by Liecia, I groaned.

"Hmmm— The bay towns that are not so bad as this place are all similar, and this place is definitely the one nearest to the country's center. As far as I've heard the occurrence happens on a long cycle, once every hundred years, so I think we'll be fine if the town was built with the assumption that it was going to be hit by a tidal wave"

Then while looking at Ludwin and the map I continued with the plans from now.

"First we make embankments and raise the overall ground level"

"Now? It's going to take a lot of manpower and time, though"

"Rotate the Royal Guards with preference on those with earth magic. If it interferes with the other projects then it can't be helped"

"Understood. Which reminds me, I heard in Walter Duchy's capital [Lagoon City] there's something called seawalls, should we build them here?"

"Seawalls, huh ... it's going to hurt the scenery, isn't it. I wanted to build this as a trade town we can use as a tourist attraction. It's also not going to be able to withstand a huge tidal wave, anyway"

"So we won't build it?"

"..... I guess so. I actually wanted to build a town without having to rely on seawalls. There should be flood control specialists with the construction and engineering guilds, go invite them and ask what they think"

"Understood. Now about the concrete city planning ..."

"Thanks to old man Urup we know the extent of the tidal wave. Put

residential, commercial, and industrial areas avoiding those. And of course the important facilities like the parliament”

“The areas within the extents aren’t going to be developed?”

“The port and fishing harbors can’t be helped, can it? Make the remaining locations into beachfront parks”

“I see. We’re going to establish them with the premise that they’re going to be submerged.

“Yeah. Also, old man Urup”

“Hyhesh? What is it?”

“I’m making you official state storyteller so pass on that [Legend of the Sea God] earlier. Your treatment will be that of a government official with the qualifications waived, so you will hand down stories and train the next generation until the day you die”

“M, me as a government official!?”

“Yes. In addition to [don’t build houses where the tidal wave will reach], add [if there’s an earthquake expect a tidal wave to come] and [if a tidal wave comes reach for high ground]. Nevermind the stuff about the wrath of the Sea God so gather it and make it something easy to transmit”

“..... Understood! I will devote the remaining days of my life!”

“Very well. Anyway, about the walls surrounding the town ...”

The three men merrily discussed the plans for the town.

Left behind by the men in such spirits, Liecia and Aisha made strained smiles as they looked at them.

“His Highness ... looks like he’s having fun”

“He must be, compared to when he was working to raise the budget”

“I guess he would. I feel like I’ve seen a bit of His Highness’s youth”

“(Youth, huh. So we’re pushing the country on that ‘youth’, aren’t we ...)”

“? What’s wrong princess?”

“Nah. It’s nothing. ... by the way Aisha”

“What is it?”

“Aisha, do you ... like Soma?”

“Yes! He has my respect and affection!”

“.... I see. Let’s both support him in our own ways so Soma can keep youthfully smiling, okay”

“..... Yes! Of course!”

The fact that that conversation happened went unnoticed by me.



Thirty years from that moment, an earthquake and an unprecedentedly big tidal wave attacked the land.

Though the land was covered in a muddy flow and lots of boats were washed away, there were surprisingly few human casualties. Everyone living in this land had been raised listening to stories about the [Legend of the Sea God], and when an earthquake happened they took immediate action and were able to find refuge. Then time passed, every time this land was assaulted by a tidal wave, the name of the first generation storyteller, venerable old man Urup, would raise even more.

Over a hundred years later, the [Statue of the King and the Old Man] would be constructed on the beachfront park. It depicts the scene at the verge of the new town’s construction, when an old man would risk his life to talk directly to the king about preparations for the tidal waves, and the wise king who listened to the old man’s proposal. If the two of them were to hear of it they would probably smile wryly and said [that’s exaggerating too much]. In particular, what kind of face Urup who should have been the storyteller would make from underneath the blades of grass upon becoming an “old man of legend” and having his story told by future generations.

Chapter 5: Rome was Born on the Sounds of Hammers C

My name is Hulbert Magna, 19 years old.

I am the eldest son of the Magna family that is renowned throughout the Elfrieden Kingdom's Army and I was originally an officer in there as well. However, something or another happened and now I have transferred to the Royal Army. This is still acceptable. However, to have my childhood friend, the Earth Magician Kaede Foxia, as my superior is something that I can't get used to even up to now. After all, her 「~nanodesuyo」 way of speaking sounds idiotic, right? Even if the order from the top is like this, nevertheless I absolutely must comply..... Honestly, it would be better if this was just a joke.

And yet, what am I doing right now?

Currently, I am not holding a sword but instead an entrenching tool (It's a shovel with rounded blade that also can be used as a close-combat weapon).

When the Royal Army arrived at the place where they had ordered us to march, what was waiting for us was work to dig up the ground. Then, we had to pour a viscous liquid (?) in the middle of the hole, harden the sides with gravels, plant seedlings on the sides and then put up street lamps that contained a type of luminous moss that was renowned for absorbing the sunlight during the day and releasing that energy as luminescence during the night. We kept on repeating this work and moved it along endlessly.

In other words, it's road construction.[1]

Although summer had already passed, the sunlight is still hot. With the entrenching tool, I kept on repeatedly digging up the soil.

Ah that's right, so this is hell.

「Why, does the Royal Army, do this kind, of work, what the heck, is the reason.」(Hulbert) 「You there! Do your job promptly without idle chatter

nanodesuyo!」(Kaede) While I swiped the sweat I looked up, seeing Kaede who stood at the pseudo-watch tower and took command of the site, beating the handrail with her megaphone. Maybe because it was hot. Her trademark fox ears that were always pointed up were currently drooping like dog ears.

「Hey Kaede, this is really,」(Hulbert)

「You can't nanodesu! Hal is a subordinate, nanodesuyo! You need to address the field overseer properly!」(Kaede) 「.....Overseer Ma'am. Is this really work for the Royal Army?」(Hulbert)

「Recently all the work for the Royal Army is like this nanodesuyo.」(Kaede) 「Can't this be entrusted to civilian contractors instead?」(Hulbert)

「It's simply because there aren't enough hands nanodesuyo. It is a plan to lay out a road network inside the Kingdom after all. Although we even employed the unemployed people of the capital, the number is still not enough even if we could borrow the hands of werecats.[2]」(Kaede) That's why, is this something that was normally done by an army?

「Furthermore, no civilian contractors will come to these outskirts nodesu. Since if you go to the outskirts, then monsters will also come out. If we employed adventurers as the guards for the contractors, then the costs will be too expensive.」(Kaede) 「In the end it was all about cheap labor.....」(Hulbert)

「If you understand, then do your work properly nodesuyo!」(Kaede)

「You are an Earth Magician right? Then won't it be finished faster if you use magic?」(Hulbert) 「I can't consume mana in this place nodesuyo. Can Hal excavate a tunnel in the mountain in exchange?」(Kaede) 「.....」(Hulbert)

I returned to my work of digging the soil.

Excavating a tunnel is hard work in times without magic.....



It was finally noon. So they gave us two hours of break to return to the camp. Everyone either ate their meals inside the tents, had a friendly chat, or took a siesta in the pseudo-beds (it was something similar to a hand stretcher). Sleeping after eating was something that the King promoted. He said that this would somehow could raise the work efficiency. Although recently all the Royal Army's works were literally 「Three meals a day with daytime siesta」, I think that no one would envy them if they know how exhausting Civil Engineering projects were.

Either way, if I don't eat the lunch meal it will be a waste, so I ate the prepared bento.

Today's bento is meat and fresh vegetables interposed between two bread. Delicious. The sweet and salty flavor from the meat really shed off the exhaustion I felt. I am told that this is a dish called "pork fried with ginger"[3], and it was something that the King invented. Somehow it was made from seasonings called "Miso", "Shouyu" and "Mirin"[4] that were planned to be produced by the Mystic Wolf Tribe in the capital.

The King designated the Royal Army as the taste-tester of prototype menu dishes. Why did he give it to the Royal Army first? It was because he wanted to see if the dishes were fitting to this country's palate. Even if it was only for the dishes..... I think this was the good part of being transferred to the Royal Army. The Kingdom's Army meal prioritized amount over quality to such extent, that they give off impression of being 「A Man's Meal」. Honestly, after eating any of these meal just once, I don't wish to return to the army at all.

「That King..... I cannot help but admit his talent in cooking.」(Hulbert)

「The dishes that the King came up with are really delicious nodesu.」
(Kaede) Before I realized it, Kaede was already sitting beside me and ate her usual menu.

「Even so, it's amazing that we're able to eat fresh vegetables nodesu. It's because the road from the capital was even connected to the nearest villages nodesuyo. To be able to easily improve the supply line, the power of a road is immense nodesu.」(Kaede) 「Will the road that we make be

that useful immediately?」(Hulbert)

「It can be said that with this increased transportation capacity, then the problem of the food shortage will be resolved, nodesuyo. With this, in the future we can even transport food that previously couldn't be transported because of spoiling issues, nodesu.[5]」(Kaede) 「.....Do you really understand the King to such an extent?」(Hulbert)

「He is a really wonderful person nanodesuyo. But that person's foresight was also really frightening desu.」(Kaede) No, I thought that your ability to understand him is also amazing. I completely didn't understand him at all, so when I finally noticed his insight I was surprised. Although she was a little dull, Kaede was basically high spec. She can use magic, her appearance is above average, and her head is also sharp. That's why she received an exceptional promotion from the king. As her childhood friend, I was a little vexed.

..... I also need to work even harder.

「Then, since Hal has finished eating, does Hal want to sleep?」(Kaede)

「That's true..... Since I'm tired, I need to rest.」(Hulbert)

「Then shall I give Hal a lap pillow?」(Kaede)

「*bu*ho*!」(Hulbert)

I spurted out the tea that I drank.

I immediately looked at my surroundings. Then I felt killing intent coming from the majority of the males towards me.

Even leaving out the favorable childhood friend assessment, Kaede is cute. Her style is not something worthy enough to mention, but she isn't that bad. Her fox ears and tail are her charm points.[6] There was also an unspoken agreement inside the Royal Army to treat her as the Idol. The King might have told me to keep the subordinates in line so they wouldn't look down on Kaede, but to be frank, I believe that if it was something that Kaede had asked of them, they would abide it, even if it could threaten their lives. It was so much that they put all their killing intent toward me who was intimate with Kaede.

「*ge*ho* What the heck are you saying?!」(Hulbert)

「Recently the topic of how the Princess gave the King a lap pillow in the Capital Park has become the talk of the town nodesuyo」(Kaede)

「They really have guts for doing that in a public place.....」(Hulbert)

Well, since they are engaged, there was nothing particularly strange about that. It is better than having a bad relationship.

If a husband's relationship with his legal wife is bad, causing him to get concubines, it could spawn a non-stop family squabble after all.

「There was also the topic about how there will be an heir next year. There was even a betting pool for the name that will be given to the heir, but since the King is a summoned person from another world, it seemed that they weren't able to narrow down the list.」(Kaede) 「I hope that they won't selfishly talk, while thinking that it's somebody else's problem.....」(Souma) 「!?」(Hulbert)(Kaede)

We were surprised by the sudden voice and turned towards the speaker, finding King Souma dropping his shoulders while sighing and Princess Liecia with a flushed face, standing in the tent entrance.



「Hey, both of you, how do you feel today?」(Souma)

「Superb, Your Majesty nodesuyo. We bid Your Majesty and Your Princess good tidings.」(Kaede) 「Well, nothing happened. Right, Liecia?」(Souma)

「That's true. But I hope you have a bit more self-awareness as a king.」(Liecia) King Souma and Princess Liecia sat down facing Kaede and began to have a friendly chat. Eh, what kind of situation is this? I and Kaede sat opposite to King Souma and Princess Liecia, with the dark elf from that time in the café standing guard close to the entrance. I was glad that Juna-san wasn't here, but that might be because of the trauma from that time.

Then King Souma redirected the conversation towards me.

「Hulbert, have you got used to life in the Royal Army?」(Souma)

「Yes Your Majesty! There is no problem Your Majesty!」(Hulbert)

「Don't be too stiff. Where's that gusto that you had shown before?」
(Souma) 「I really ask to be forgiven for that time! Although I'm just a
lowly soldier I dared to act rudely towards Your Majesty Souma.」(Hulbert)
「This is a king's order. Stop using polite language. Also no need to call me
Your Majesty, just Souma is fine.」(Souma) 「No, but.....」(Hulbert)

「"Hal", did you not hear it well? This is an order.」(Souma)

「..... I acknow-, I understand.....Souma」(Hulbert)

「That's good. Even if I had a lot of people that serve me in the royal
castle, there was no one who I can bump heads with. I wished to have a
guy close to my age that I can talk casually to.」(Souma) King Souma... no,
Souma nodded in satisfaction. What was he saying, geez. But since the
person himself said that it was okay, then it will be fine, I think. I also
didn't hold that much respect to him either.

「Then.....What's you doing here?」(Hulbert)

「It's an inspection. An inspection. I want to see the state of progress of
the road construction.」(Souma) 「Needless to say, we are working hard,
you know.」(Hulbert)

「It seems so. I have seen the results while travelling to this place.」
(Souma) 「Be thankful to us. Since we had ridiculous hardships while
working on it.」(Hulbert) 「But haven't I given out a lavish reward in the
form of a delicious meal? The compensation is already quite
satisfactory.」(Souma) We quickly got used to talking in a casual manner.
In the first place, Souma also didn't have the air of a king.

When Souma guessed that our lunch had ended, he stood up.

「Then both of you, can you accompany me in inspecting the road? I
want to explain the road construction to Liecia.」(Souma) 「..... Can Kaede
do this by herself? She is the site supervisor, right?」(Hulbert) 「No, since I
want to see the actual work. Besides, if you thoroughly work when the
superior asked for you to do it, in the future this connection will be useful

to you, you know?」(Souma) 「How could it be useful?」(Hulbert)

「Let's see.... Currently I'm researching a method to make Zelring udon into an instant food. It will be a food that, just by adding hot water, no matter when and where, , you can eat Zelring udon. Even in the military camp. Should I send some of the trial product to this unit...」(Souma)
「Please this way Your Majesty. Let me be Your Majesty's guide.」(Hulbert)
I stood up and saluted to His Majesty Souma.

Instant Zelring udon. Isn't this good?

This is a chance to increase the food menu's variety that was scarce even in normal times, I cannot miss this.

Seeing me quickly turning my palms, the Princess and Kaede looked coldly at me, but I didn't mind.

After all, food is the top priority![7]



Kaede, Souma, Princess Liecia, Aisha-dono and I, we five, arrived at the place where the road was in the middle stage of the paving procedure. There, Souma actually observed the work procedure of the task that he had entrusted to us. Since right now it's still break time, if possible I wanted to rest, however this is all for the sake of Instant Zelring udon.

First we inspected the soil that was piling up on both sides of the road.

「Thus, in this way we filled the center bordered by the soil on both sides by pouring it in that viscous substance.」(Souma) Souma is explaining the road-making procedure to Princess Liecia.

「What is that viscous substance anyway?」(Liecia)

「『Ancient Concrete』. A mixture of volcanic ash and limestone[8]. It has the property of hardening after some time passed, yet still retain some of its former viscosity. This makes it hard to crack, and its strength..... Well, won't it be easier to understand if you see it?」(Souma)
Souma spoke these words and then he pointed at the giant house-sized monitor lizard. That monitor lizard pulled a container that had many

wheels. The containers were fully loaded with construction materials and provisions for the soldiers.

That lizard is called a Rhinosaurus.

As with what was referred to as “Many-Horned Lizards”, the two huge horns that grew on top of its snout were the characteristics of this giant lizard (Souma expressed that it was 『Just like a combination of a rhinoceros and a komodo dragon, but with its size enlarged by 10 times』). It is omnivorous, docile, and easy to tame, so it is bred to pull large amounts of payload in large cities. Still, they also hold tremendous charging power on the occasion they grew restless and rampaged out of control, so they could also be used as siege weapons.

「The concrete's strength is to such that, even if that Rhinosaurus dashed atop of it with all of its strength, it won't crack.」(Souma) 「What, such a hard material?」(Liecia)

「Ah, no it's not like that. Rather, it has moderate elasticity so that it could spread around the forces applied to it. That's why in my world, even buildings that were built with this concrete 2000 years ago still stand to this day.」(Souma) Buildings from 2,000 years ago, huh? That was 4 times more ancient than the date this country was founded. Really amazing.

「And then, the road lamps installed on both side of the road are the same type as the ones used in the capital. Although I believe it would reduce the appearance of night wildlife, but with this, it would also be hard for someone to get lost even during the night. Then, about the trees planted on the roadside, those are was trees originating from the God-Protected Forest that are called 【Exorcist Trees】[9].」(Souma) 「Exorcist Trees?」(Liecia)

「Aisha, I leave the explanation to you.」(Souma)

「Yes, Your Majesty! These exorcist tree always emit waves that are hated by monsters, so they don't get near it. Perhaps this effect was was born to protect itself from being eaten by boar monsters. So now, the surroundings of the villages inside the God-Protected Forest are densely planted with Exorcist Tree to protect them from monster attacks.」(Aisha)

「I see. It's like a simple barrier, right?」(Liecia)

Towards the Princess' reply, Souma nodded in satisfaction.

「It can be referred to as local knowledge. Well, I don't know what the effect of mass planting it so densely in the road will be on the local ecosystem. So, we will not make a "complete defense against monsters" and instead leave a moderate gap in between the trees to limit it to "hard for monsters to approach".」(Souma) 「Eh, why? Isn't a complete defense against monsters better for the logistics?」(Liecia) 「Then, Liecia: Demon Wolves and Red Bears change their hunting grounds as the seasons change, but if they were stopped because of the road, without sufficient food they would resolve themselves to attack livestock or human settlements. Similarly, if their habitat is limited by the road and they exhaust all their food, Demon Monkeys or Demon Boars could descend to the human settlements and devour the crops in the fields. While they do that, they could disseminate mountain leeches or parasites that originally didn't exist before in the human settlements..... Then if this happened, what will you do?」[10](Souma) 「I understand that it is better to completely prevent it from happening, but why do you need to be that specific?」(Liecia) 「Because the countermeasure against harmful animals is a public issue that the local government has to do!」(Souma) Souma emphasized his words while opening his eyes wide.

Um. I don't really know anything about the local government, but I can feel his enthusiasm. I admired Kaede who stood before Souma and seemed to properly understand his words.

「Hoe~[11], to even think that far, Your Majesty is amazing nanodesuyo!」(Kaede) 「Mm. Well I believe I should properly consider the merits and demerits of the policies that I will make and I was only trying to reduce the demerit part as much as possible.」(Souma) 「It's amazing nodesuyo~. As expected from Your Majesty nodesuyo~」(Kaede) With gleaming eyes, Kaede looked at Souma who became embarrassed.

I saw Princess Liecia's expression become a little peeved while looking at those two acting like this.

「Ummm, Princess?」(Hulbert)

「What?」 (Liecia)

「Your face. It's scary.」(Hulbert)

「Re-really?but, shouldn't you look at yourself before talking about others?」(Liecia) 「Eh?」(Hulbert)

Somehow or another, it seemed that my expression also become a little peeved.....

Then it happened at that time.

「No way!」(Aisha)

Aisha-dono who stood separately from us suddenly yelled. Is something happened? We looked at Aisha-dono who was greatly perturbed after seeing something like a letter in her hand. A white bird perched on her trembling shoulder. Is that perhaps a Mail Pigeon? By exploiting its homing instinct and ability that can perceive the wave that was released by its owner, you can contact a specific person or place. Disregarding the Royal Broadcast that was more like a cheat, using a mail pigeon is the fastest means of communication in current times. Then, does this mean that she has received a report from somewhere?

「What happened, Aisha?」(Souma)

When Souma inquired, Aisha replied with trembling lips.

「Just now, I received a report from the God-Protected Forest: 『Large-scale landslide had occurred』!」(Aisha)

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[1] Souma just ordered the Royal Army to build a Concrete Road.....

[2] It's a pun on the proverb: 猫の手も借りたい (neko no te mo karitai) literally means "I even want to borrow a cat's hand." It mean that when you are so busy that you feel like you would even take help from a cat. In this case it's not a Cat but Werecat [3] 生姜焼きShogayaki. Actually means fried ginger, but in reality, it oftentimes use pork.

[4] In case you didn't know:

- Miso is a traditional Japanese seasoning produced by fermenting soybeans with salt and the fungus *Aspergillus oryzae*, known in Japanese as *kōji*, and sometimes rice, barley, or other ingredients.
- Shouyu is Japanese style soy sauce, that use more wheat or other grains in production than the Chinese version.
- Mirin is Japanese style Cooking Rice Wine.

[5] In case you guys didn't get it. Let's say a fisherman gets fresh fish. Fish will go bad in 2 days (this is just an example). To transport to the nearest city, it will usually take 3 days (clogged dirt roads, uneven roads, roads can't be used by carriages, etc.). But with the new road (no more mud clogs made by the rain, you can even walk at night thanks to light from the road lamps, the road cuts straight through mountains, hills and valleys) the transportation speed would be significantly faster. So in our case, the fisherman can deliver his catch to the city even before the fish starts rotting. There a reason why most modern road is straight, and disregards hills, rivers, etc.

Also some food shortage is caused not by the lack of production but the lack of distribution. With good road, a surplus region could move their excess food easily to deficit region.

[6] Charm point: A Wasei Eigo (Japanese English Term) to refer to the most attractive feature of a person. Like the charm point of beep is the twintail!

[7] Another MC conquering his "adversaries" with delicious food. Satou will be proud.

[8] Roman Concrete, also known as *opus caementium*.

[9] 退魔樹 Taimaki. Taima is composed from 退 that means repel, expel, reject and 魔 that can mean demon,evil,magic,dst. So Taima can mean exorcism (expelling the evil). 樹 means just a tree, a woody plant. Also Repel Tree sound too much Pokemonish...

[10] This is happening in developing country in Africa, Asia and South America, as rampant deforestation disturb local ecosystems that make the forest animals moved to area near human settlements, bringing with them various arbovirus, bacteria or parasite previously unknown to humankind. For further reading, read

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0789e/a0789e03.html> [11] An exclamation of surprise. Ever read or watch Cardcaptor Sakura? This is her trademark catchphrase.

Chapter 5: Rome was Born on the Sounds of Hammers D

「Just now, I received a report from my father, the village chief of the Dark Elves. Last night, suddenly 『There was a landslide and it buried half of the village』. It seems that..... lately, the God-Protected Forest has been receiving nearly constant rainfall..... The number of missing people..... is a...lot.....」(Aisha) Aisha was reporting, but she stopped in the middle of it. After all, her hometown and family had just experienced a terrible disaster. Although she tried to endure it, it was still a considerable shock to her. I was worried about her, but I didn't have time to console her. This is for sure an emergency situation, it would be unforgivable if the one with the highest authority couldn't think of something. While I was thinking silently, Hal threw a complaint over to me, 「You should have consoled the subordinates who follow you.」, but before I could reply back to him, his ear was pulled by Kaede.

「Auch-auch-auch..... Wait. Kaede. It hurts.」(Hulbert)

「The King is in the middle of thinking seriously. Don't bother him.」
(Kaede) 「.....」(Hulbert)

She is a good childhood friend, don't you agree? Treasure her dearly.

Alright, I had collected my thoughts. I raised my face and immediately ordered a mobilization.

「This unit will head out and give aid to the Dark Elves' village!」(Souma)
Hearing what I said, Hal's eyes blinked with surprise, while his ears were still being pulled by Kaede.

「Even if you say this unit, there is less than 50 people here.」(Hulbert)
「Disaster relief is a race against time. We don't have time to return to the capital. Luckily, this place is closer to the God-Protected Forest than the capital. First of all, this unit will be dispatched as the advance unit!」
(Souma) Afterwards, I issued various commands.

「Liecia, return to the capital and muster a relief unit. Also, ask Hakuya

to send food, clothing, tents and other relief supplies towards the Elves' village.](Souma) 「I understand, but..... You have your “consciousness” working in the capital, right? If you have, then won't it be faster to contact them?](Liecia) 「I can't do it. It's outside the range. My ability's range only extends up to 50 meters.](Souma) 「Is that true!?](Liecia)

It was the truth. Furthermore there were many other limitations. For example, the things that I can move were only “my own possessions”. Then, I can float them up to 2 meters above the ground (or floor) before I felt that “my consciousness is going to leave the object”, so I can't access my consciousness on objects that are far away from me.

Therefore, even my telekinesis can't mimic the “stopping bullets in mid-air and then sending them back to the enemy” move like in a movie[1]. I can't access objects that are too far or belong to someone else, so gathering secret information using this skill was impossible. As expected, this was a skill that was only marvelous for dealing with domestic paperwork.

「Eh? But previously, wasn't your 『Musashi Boy-Kun』 able to adventure faraway?](Liecia) 「Ah..... That was an exception. If the manipulated object was something resembling a doll, then in that case, the effective range could be extended into the capital's surroundings and it can turned into a clone that I can manipulate precisely. It's like my consciousness transferred into the doll.](Souma) 「.....Isn't that like a ghost possession?](Liecia)

Yes. I couldn't deny that it felt like that.

Perhaps my power was to divide a part of my soul to possess things like a vengeful spirit. Maybe it wasn't actually telekinesis but poltergeist like phenomenon instead?..... I couldn't deny this. If so, then my powers 『Telekinesis』 and 『Multiple Simultaneous Parallel Thinking』 shall be called 《Living Poltergeist》[2] from now on. It sounded a bit chuuni-ish[3] though.

「Well, because of this, someone needs to personally go and make a request for relief.](Souma) 「I understand. Leave it to me.](Liecia)

「When you come back, don't forget to bring along some guards! It wouldn't be funny if something happened to you along the way.」(Souma)
「I think I'll be okay, but..... I understand. You be careful, too.」(Liecia)
Liecia quickly broke into running. Although, when you think about it carefully, it was amazing that I had made a princess of a country into my gopher, but Liecia didn't mind at all. In this case, we were already dancing to the same beat in harmony.[4]

「Aisha, how far is the God-Protected Forest from this place?」(Souma)
「A half-day with a fast horse. With the army's average marching pace, even if we hurry, it will take about 2 days.」(Aisha) 「A day and a half..... What time did the disaster happen?」(Souma) 「I heard that it happened at the third watch[5] of the night.」(Aisha) 「It means that half a day had passed..... No matter how fast we walk, two and a half day will have passed since the disaster. It will be difficult to conduct rescue with only half a day remaining until it reaches 72-hours.」(Souma) Then I heard Hal ask, 「What's that? The meaning of 72-hours?」.

「In a disaster such as this, there is a borderline time that when crossed, then the death risk of the people who need help would increase dramatically. This line is about three whole days after the disaster has happened, the 『72 Hours Wall』.[6]」(Souma) 「Sorry, but please explain it in simpler words.」(Hubert)

「To put it simply, if it still under 72 hours, then we could save a lot of people.」(Souma) 「I see..... Eh, then wouldn't that mean that we shouldn't be idling here and should quickly go towards the God-Protected Forest!? It's two whole days travelling to there, right?」(Hulbert) 「I know that. Are there any carriages here?」(Souma)

「Originally, if we wanted to go or return to somewhere else, we will need to submit a request for transportation. But even preparing carriages for 50 people would take quite some time.」(Hulbert) 「Damn. Isn't there any other way.....!!」(Souma)

I remembered a certain thing and turned back my head.

Hal and the others, who also saw what I had seen, noticed it as well.

In front of our view was the animal who had pulled the container filled with construction material. A fusion between a rhinoceros and a komodo dragon, enlarged 10 times, the giant lizard 【Rhinosaurus】. It had a large body, but it could run continuously with a velocity resembling an early train locomotive; the creature that was the keystone of land transportation. If the road could be completed in the future, I was wondering if it was possible to produce a station wagon[7] using this Rhinosaurus.

「Hey, Hal and Kaede-chan.」(Souma)

「What?」(Hulbert)

「What nanodesu?」(Kaede)

「It will be probably cause motion sickness, but will you guys be okay?」
(Souma) 「I rarely get motion sickness nodesu.」(Kaede)

「.....I'll endure it.」(Hulbert)

「I see. Then I will also endure it.」(Souma)

I then issued an order to the 50 soldiers from the Royal Army on the spot.

「Unload all the materials from the container! Fortunately, the God-Protected Forest is located close to the road, but we will need to travel on foot in the forest! The luggage should be light! Leave the unloaded materials as it is! You won't be blamed even if it gets lost! Since I will be the one who writes the apology letter, you will only receive Marcus' scolding! Don't show improper behavior by sponging off of the food that were set aside for relief!」(Souma) 「「「Yes, Your Majesty!」」」(Soldiers)

The Royal Army soldiers promptly unloaded the materials from the container as per the order.

As expected, since they had only performed on constructing public engineering works lately, they worked quickly.

They moved the materials with the efficiency and cooperativeness that I have only seen from a skilled worker of a moving company. Truly, they

are splendid.

「No, aren't we soldiers?」(Hulbert)

「Stop striking an idle chat and get working, Hal nodesuyo!」(Kaede)
Kaede-chan was carrying a large amount of materials all by herself even though it would usually need several adult men to move them. It was likely that she was frivolously using her magic. It seemed that Earth type magic was a magic that manipulates gravity. They couldn't produce soil or stone from nothing, but they could manipulate the already existing soil and stone. That's how she could accomplish this feat. Playing a big part..... Currently the most unhelpful person in this place, without a doubt, was me. Being just your average person, I couldn't do physical work and if I tried to help the army, then I could only become a hindrance.

Without doing anything and only watching the work in silence, Aisha came to me.

「Your Majesty.....」(Aisha)

She had such a frail expression as if she could collapse at any time.

Ever since the Talent Gathering event, Aisha was always stood close by as my bodyguard and I think that I had seen various expressions from her. Her full resolute expression when she had her direct talk with me, the gallant warrior expression, the childish expression when she ate delicious food, the stray dog expression when she was made to wait for that food..... I had seen various expressions, but this was the first time I had seen her with such a fragile expression.

Seeing her, who had an incomparable fighting strength that I didn't possess, having such a frail appearance, was hurting my chest. Aisha had always protected me as a bodyguard, but I think this time might be a scene where it's my turn to protect her. I put my hand on her head that was just slightly lower than mine.

「Eh, Your Majesty?」(Aisha)

「Leave it to me.」(Souma)

I pulled her closer and put her forehead on my shoulder.

「Although my power is far weaker than Aisha, I am in a fortunate position that can move a lot of people. That's why you should leave it to me. As long as they could still be saved, I will save them.」(Souma) 「Your Majesty..... Your Majes-huaaaaaaa!」(Aisha)

Aisha buried her head on my shoulder and burst into tears.

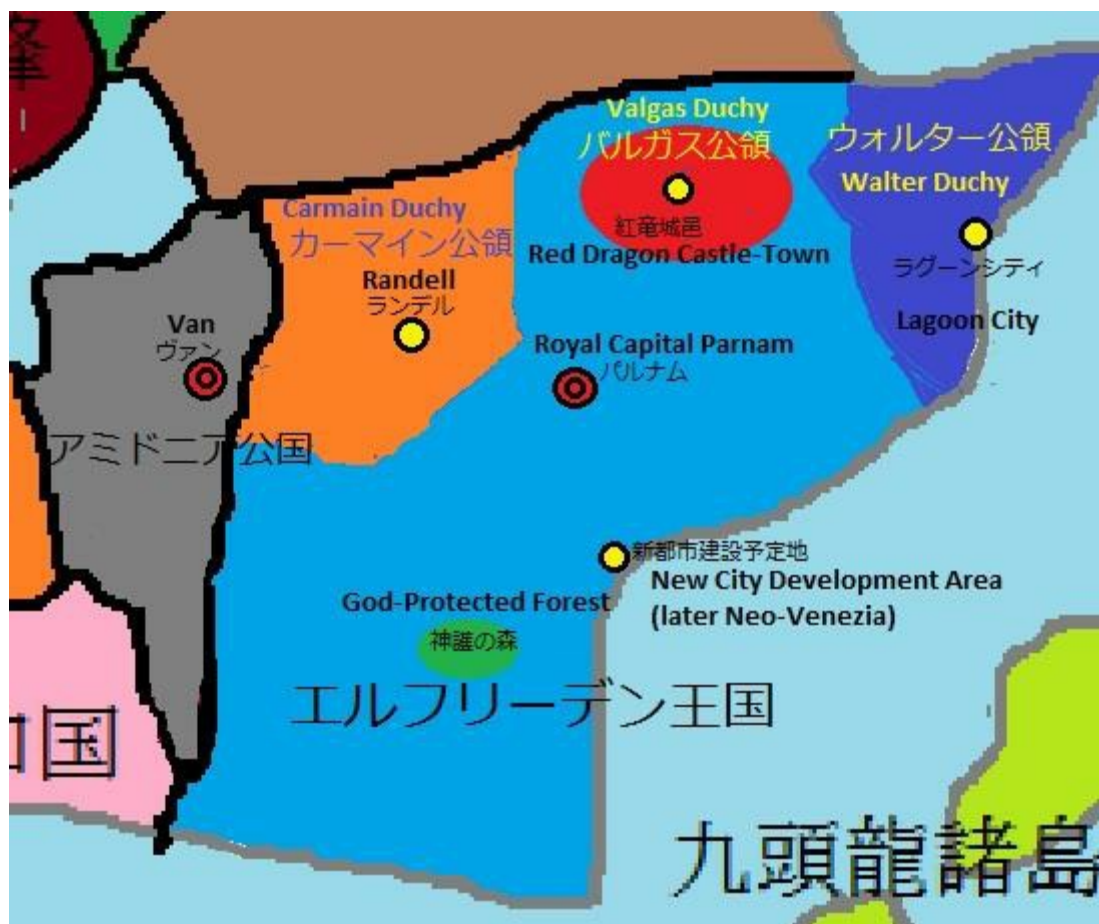
I gently patted her head.

Until the preparations were completed, I continued to comfort the sobbing Aisha.



The God Protected Forest was located in the woodlands in the southern

part of this country.



The name originated from the legend that the forest was protected by the divine beast 『Kamui』, who took the form of a large antelope. Although in recent years, there was no one who had seen it, it was said that there were many signs of its existence. It was said that the fact that the forest didn't get ransacked by locusts, parched by drought, or frozen by cold waves and was always lushly green and filled with trees was all thanks to its divine protection. A divine beast whose existence was only known from its divine protection..... Does it really exist?

The ones who “self-proclaimed” themselves as the guardians of the divine beast 『Kamui』's forest were those of the dark elves' tribe.

The forest had an area that might be as vast as the sea of trees below Fuji.[8] The so-called『Forest』was the self-governing territory of the Dark Elves. Originally it was exclusive to their own race, and people from other races were prohibited from entering the forest (Aisha also came to have her direct talk with me about the intrusion from humans). This time, about 50 people (the succeeding units would be in the hundreds) would enter the forest for relief. However, this was a special case where the dark elves' chief's daughter Aisha appealed for it.

It was troublesome. However, these was the customs of the dark elves' tribe.

They live in the forest, closely guard their autonomy, and detest outsider intervention. Actually, despite the fact that they were devastated by a landslide, they wouldn't send any appeal for relief to the capital. Maybe, if Aisha didn't contact us, we wouldn't even know that a disaster had occurred there. "It was our problem so we would solve it ourselves": as the consequence of this, the number of people who lost their lives could rise even higher.

「..... what a foolish way of thinking.」(Souma)

「If someone has never seen the outside world, their way of thinking could become inflexible. I came in contact with Your Majesty and Your Majesty accepted my opinion, and there is a sign of change as of late, however.....」(Aisha) While traveling to the God-Protected Forest, Aisha said it with a sad tone: 「This is not the time to just be living idly in the forest! Don't they understand that the Demon Lord's Army could head to the south at any time?! Do they seriously believe that the divine beast-sama would save them if they keep cooping themselves up in the forest? Even when the divine beast-sama only grants its divine protection on the forest and not the guardian beast for the dark elves!」(Aisha) 「A, ah yeah.....」(Souma)

「That's why, dark elves should learn how vast the world is!」(Aisha) Aisha showed her zeal. It felt that it had been some time since I had seen her gallant figure.

「Furthermore, if they are stuck in the forest, then wouldn't they be unable to eat the delicious food that Your Majesty had come up with?」(Aisha) 「Don't ruin the mood!」(Souma)

I amended my words, as expected, Aisha was a disappointing elf.
..... Well, this was much better than if she was always on edge.



「Ooo, Your Majesty! Welcome to our humble abode.」(Elf)

When we arrived at the elves' village, we were greeted by a handsome dark elf that looked like someone in his twenties.

His looks and features reminded me of Aisha a bit, so maybe he was her brother. His height was about 190 cm. Although the ornaments on his head and arm showed that he was in a high position, the high quality robe that he wore was dirtied by soil. He seemed to be a little tired.

Aisha then gave her respects to the young elf.

「Father, I have brought His Majesty with me.」(Aisha)

「Good work. To be able to acquire the friendship of the King, this might be the Divine Beast's guidance.」(Aisha's Father) 「Father!？」(Souma)

Looking at me who had become surprised, a smile broke out on the tired face of the young elf.

「Oh King, I believe that this is the first time that I have met you. I am the chief of the dark elves and Aisha's father, Boden Utgard[9]. Thank you for always taking care of my daughter.」(Boden) 「Ah, umm... You look young.」(Souma)

「A pure blooded elf body's would stop maturing after reaching a certain age. Our lifespans are also three times longer than that of a human, so even if I look like this, I've already lived for 80 years.」(Boden) I see. The outline was similar with the elf – dark elves in the stories. Elves had long lifespans, didn't get old, and could be said to be extremely handsome and beautiful. However, Marcus the adviser, who was a half-elf, was just a normal looking middle aged man. Maybe the lifespan and growth is different in the case of a half-elf?

Leaving that aside, I whispered to Aisha.

「(This is quite a warm welcome, but isn't it said that the forest is exclusively for dark elves only?)」(Souma) 「(Father is the head of the open culture faction and understands the merits of interacting with outsiders. It was father who was the one who agreed for me to go and petition Your Majesty.)」(Aisha) 「(I see. So, Aisha's tendency to not to be concerned too much with rules and such is because of this person's influence.)」(Souma)

I exchanged a handshake with Boden.

「I am Elfrieden's King Representative Souma Kazuya. We arrived to help with disaster relief according to the request from Aisha-dono.」

(Souma) 「We really appreciate it. Even so, since you are the king, you don't need use polite language with me.」(Boden) 「.....I understand. Is talking like this good for you?」(Souma)

「Yes. Even so, I never imagined that the King himself will be coming personally.」(Boden) 「I was just inspecting by chance. For the time being, I brought along the nearby 50 soldiers from the Royal Army as the advance rescue party. The second unit will be arriving several days later carrying relief goods.」(Souma) 「Thank you very much. Normally, I would warmly welcome the Royal Visit and show you the village, however since the situation had become like this, I ask you for your forgiveness.」(Boden) 「I understand..... It's a tragic state of affairs.」(Souma)

The dark elves' settlements were surrounded by 『Exorcist Trees』 that were densely planted in a circle. The forest was dotted with such settlements where the dark elves lived. If we judge the God-Protected Forest as a country, then this village could be thought of as the capital, compared to other villages in the forest, the size was greater, like the Tokyo Dome[10]. Off course the number of dark elves who lived in it was much higher than the other villages.

In this village, it was as if one third of the village's eastern side had been gouged off with soil and sand. It seems that the slightly elevated slope on the eastern side had collapsed. Maybe because of the constant rain, a large amount of soil had been exposed by the great amount of flowing water. This might cause soil to considerably loosen. Currently the weather was clear, so it helped us a bit. If there was rain, then I fear there could be another landslide while we were conducting the rescue.

「Can you give me the damage report?」(Souma)

「The number of casualties has almost reached 100 people. The number of missing persons is at least more than 40 people.」(Boden) 「Then, we need to start rescuing them as soon as possible. However, since there is a

risk of a secondary disaster, it is better to evacuate the women and children to a safe place. Then, have someone to watch over the ruptured mountain. If the mountain starts to move for even a bit or produces a strange sound, report to us. It won't be a laughing joke if there is another landslide while we are in the middle of rescuing the victims.」(Souma) 「At once, Your Majesty. Is there anything else that we can do to help?」(Boden) 「Prepare a list of missing persons. Once we have confirmed their safety, we will cross them out one by one.」(Souma) 「As you wish, Your Majesty.」(Boden)

Bringing my discussion with Boden to an end, I then gave an instruction for the Royal Army.

「Aisha.」(Souma)

「Yes, Your Majesty!」(Aisha)

「Evacuate the women and children to a place unlikely to undergo landslides. Consult the place with Boden-san. You must act as a guard to send them to safety.」(Souma) 「Yes, as you wish, Your Majesty.」(Aisha)

「Alright. Attention Royal Army! Now we will begin to search for missing persons. You guys are really skilled in digging holes in the dirt, right? Listen with your ears carefully for the sound of people asking for help and then cautiously rescue them.」(Souma) 「「「Yes, Your Majesty!」」」(Soldiers)

「However, don't do the impossible. If it collapses again, then even if you are in the middle of rescuing, you must quickly evacuate. I won't forgive you if even a single one of you becomes a victim. Do you understand!」(Souma) 「「「Yes, Your Majesty!」」」(Soldiers)

I nodded at the Royal Army's reply, then I handed out the command: 「I hereby proclaim the start of the rescue operation!」(Souma)

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[1] MATRIX! (BULLET TIME)

[2] 生きた騒霊達リビング・ポルターガイスト Ikita Sourei-tachi (Ribingu

Porutaagaitsu) [3] Chuuni-ish = had an attribute of Chuunibyou

[4] A proverb: Two people already had the same way of thinking or doing.

[5] Okay I took liberty translating this. The actual text said Uchimitsu or the hour of the Ox (1 am – 3 am, in the night). This corresponds to how a Chinese/Japanese person called their 12 hours based on the Zodiac. On behalf of the people who didn't come from Eastern Asia, and the Western setting of the novel, I translated this by borrowing the Vigillae Noctis (the four Night Watches) based on an old Roman timekeeping practice.

[6] A moment for PSA: For natural disaster prone please check if you have enough stuff to last 72 hours. You can check in <http://www.ready.gov/kit> (quite nice).

[7] You know... The Oregon Trail style wagon... or the early train carriage.

[8] Aokigahara....

[9] ボーダン=ウドガルド Bodan Udogarudo = Boden Utgard. Although I was tempted to turn his name into Wodan Utgard...

[10] One Tokyo Dome is about 1 hectare. Won't 1 hectare be too crowded to be a village of at least 500 people? But well the average dwelling density in Europe and Asia is about 100 dwellings per hectare so it is feasible.

Chapter 5: Rome was Born on the Sounds of Hammers E

The rescue operation was a total war.

Everyone was united in what they could do. Calling out the missing person's name, listening carefully for the answer, and if they heard even a faint sound, then they would dig out the sand and dirt. No matter if they were villagers or Royal Army soldiers, they would cooperate in moving the soil, cutting the fallen trees, and rescuing the people trapped below. Kaede-chan moved a large boulder with her magic and Aisha, who returned after escorting the women and children to safety, stood watch for the mountain's condition from atop a tree. She was in charge of giving the signal to evacuate if she saw the soil collapse.

Hal and I were conducting a search together.

「Hal, under that large tree! There is someone that is still alive!」(Souma)
「Haa!? But I didn't hear any voice?」(Hulbert)

「There is! So dig quickly!」(Souma)

Hal looked at me with a dubious look, however when he was digging just like I told him, a girl's hand jutted out from the ground.

「Are you serious?!..... Wait a moment, we will rescue you soon!」
(Hulbert) Hal moved the wreckage, and pulled out the dark elf girl. Although it was hard to tell because of the brown skin, she seemed quite pale. Of course, maybe it was because she had been soaked in the wet soil for quite some time. It was good that this was still in the summer's heat season. I returned with a blanket; Hal was hugging the girl and rubbed her back.

「You've done good. You are already safe now.」(Hulbert) 「.....Uu..... uwaaaaaaaaaaaaa」(Girl)

「It's okay, since you are already safe now!」(Hulbert) Hal was frantically trying to soothe the girl that broke into tears.

I believe that in times like this, a guy is useless. Hal and I could only nervously say 「it's alright」 repeatedly. The girl was wrapped in the blanket and after she calmed down, I called out to one of the nearby Royal Army soldiers.

「Take this girl to a safe place.」(Souma)

「Yes, Your Majesty! As you wish!」(Soldier)

I saw the soldier carry the girl away and then Hal began to question me.

「How did you find that child? Even I didn't hear anything back then.」
(Hulbert) 「Because I am always searching at various places.」(Souma)
「You can use a Searching Magic?」(Hulbert)

「It's kinda different..... I am using this.」(Souma) I presented my palm to Hal, and a small thing jumped demurely from the ground and landed on it. When Hal saw it, his eyes blinked in surprise.

「Is that..... a mouse?」(Hulbert)

「It's a wood carving.」(Souma)

It was a 10 cm sized wooden carving of a mouse. I manipulated it using my ability 【Living Poltergeist】, to search for the people trapped under the debris. If my ability is used on things that imitate living organisms, then I can make them delicately move even to long distances. In this way, I moved 4 wooden mice just like real mice and searched for people that needed to be saved.

Hal spoke out his admiration.

「It is great that you happened to be carrying these puppets.」(Hulbert)
「When I was in the middle of my date with Liecia, I discovered these in a street stall. Thinking that I could maybe use them for something, I put them inside the carry bag I wore for self protection.」(Souma) By the way, inside the carry bag there were also 2 pieces of 『Mushashi Boy-Kun Doll (Small)』, currently they were doing surveillance inside the forest. Even though the mountain had collapsed and the road conditions were even worse, since the doll's weight was light, they could just lightly jump over obstacle.

「Your power is unexpectedly amazing.」(Hulbert)

「Ah, this is the first time it can be useful for things other than for domestic affa-.....Ugh」(Souma) 「Hey, what's wrong!？」(Hulbert)

At that time, I crouched down and vomited. Seeing me vomiting like that, Hal looked at me in worry.

「H-hey Souma...」(Hulbert)

「*blurrgh*.....*cough*cough*.....」(Souma)

「A-are you okay? Why did you throw up suddenly?」(Hulbert) 「.....
cough.....So-sorry. One of the mice that was in the middle of
searching..... suddenly discovered a badly damaged corpse.....」(Souma)
「Badly damage.....?」(Hulbert)

「The eyeball-」(Souma)

「No, that's enough! I don't wanna hear anymore!」(Hulbert) Hal turned away and put his hands on his ears..... I understood how he felt.

I looked at the sand and soil in front of my eyes. When reporters are talking about the disaster location on the television news program, they only do close-up shots of the disaster victims and the miraculous survivors. However, after personally seeing the actual disaster location, it actually seemed like a scene from hell. As a former commoner, the bleak reality is intensely harsh. It could break someone's heart.

However, those kinds of things are better left without being said for now.

「Hal! Left side, 50 meters front, there are two people who need help under the rocks!」(Souma) 「! Understood!」(Hulbert)

.....Currently; I just need to; suppress my heart.....



The all-out rescue operation continued.

Since then, we had dug out a large number of dark elves from the debris that was covered by soil. Everyone had some kind of injury, some had

serious injury with poor chance of survival even though they had been saved, and there were large numbers of those who were already dead. The ratio of the survivors and the deceased was about half and half, leaning a bit more to the deceased side. When I first arrived at this village and heard Boden-san say 「the casualties is close to 100」, I thought that the dead-to-alive ratio would only about 20%, but I understood that as time progressed, the situation would only continue to steadily deteriorate.

The searching party had been encroached by fatigue. Even though they took turns to rest, it had been three days since the disaster first struck. The dark elves of course were tired, and so were the soldiers who not only had to search but also had marched a long distance earlier today. There were also a considerable number of people who had been rescued (there are discrepancies with the survivor toll and the death toll). I asked Boden-san to reconfirm whether there were any people still missing. If we crossed out the names of the survivors, then I think we could divide personnel to do a focused search for the missing people.

When I was thinking this,

「Oh Divine Beast! Oh Kamui-Sama! Why?!」(Young Elf)[1]

I heard a sorrowful scream. What I saw was a young(?) male dark elf that somehow resembled Boden-san. He was banging his head and arms on the ground while wailing. I inquired of Aisha who had returned from taking women and children to a safe place and was now currently participating in the search.

「Aisha, who is that person?」(Souma)

「That person is..... My uncle, Robthor Udgard[2]. He is my father's younger brother.」(Aisha) 「And the reason his wailing is of course.....」(Souma) 「Yes. His wife and daughter, in other word, my aunt and my cousin are still missing.」(Aisha) 「That is..... really tragic. Are you okay with it, Aisha?」(Souma) 「About that..... If father is the leader of the open culture faction, then uncle is the leader of the conservatives, our family didn't really get along..... His daughter is still young and cute, this is really heartbreaking.....」(Aisha) 「I see.....」(Souma)

The deadline of 72 hours had already been crossed. If they were found now, then they would already.....

Suddenly, Robthor-san looked towards my direction.

Noticing my presence, he staggeringly approached me.

「King.....Oh King.....Why?」(Robthor)

Robthor-san extended his hands towards my neck, Aisha-san immediately emitted her anger, but I raised my hand to stop her. After all, those hands weren't aiming to strangle my neck but only to cling on it. If I shook my body of even a little stir, then he would surely fall down.

「Oh king..... I had protected the forest until now. So why, why the forest, my family.....」(Robthor) 「.....」(Souma)

Aisha shot him a gaze.

「It's because Uncle opposed to periodically thinning the forest. What was it that you said? "It is preposterous for dark elves that protect the forest to perform unnecessary lumbering". The location where the landslide happened was the place where we couldn't perform periodical thinning because Uncle opposed it.」(Aisha) She informed us so. So, that happened.....

「Oh King! Why! Why was my family destroyed by the forest that I protected?! If I cut trees like Boden and the rest said, then could my family have been saved!？」(Robthor) 「That.....I don't know.」(Souma)

「Why!？」(Robthor)

「I am certain that by doing moderate periodical thinning, then it could promote the growth of the forest's undergrowth, which will increasing the soil's water retention capacity. Then, it will create an environment where it would be difficult for landslides to occur. However, it will only be "difficult to occur". In case rain that last for long periods of time like right now, then..... it wouldn't be strange for it to be able to occur no matter where the place is.」(Souma) 「But that...But that only means that we were just unlucky.....」(Robthor) 「It is bad luck that played for when the landslide occurred. However, if we do periodic thinning, then it means

that we will always be working inside the forest. Certainly, this will make it easier to notice the signs of impending landslides such as hearing weird sounds or seeing the forest shifting. If we can notice it, then we can also establish some countermeasures for it or evacuate ahead of time.」

(Souma) This is what had been said as one of the advantages of building terraced rice-fields on a mountain-slope.

Although, by cutting the trees and turned the land into terraced rice fields could be thought as causing it easier to experience landslides, but when a landslide does actually occur, it rarely causes any human casualties or injuries. The reason is since people were always working in the fields, they will notice immediately if there are signs of an impending landslide, so it makes it easier for them to set up a countermeasure for it. The most important countermeasure for a landslide is to just keep observing the forest. Since this world didn't have any landslide sensors like modern Japan, that's why having a large number of eyes is important.

「Was protecting the forest..... a wrong decision?」(Robthor) 「The notion of protecting itself is a mistake. As you can see, nature isn't that weak to need a human to protect it.」(Souma) 「.....」(Robthor)

「If it is a human's egoism to destroy nature, then trying to protect it is also an egoism. Actually, a cycle of destruction and regeneration could be expected to happen naturally, since it doesn't happen for the sake of a human's convenience. What a human can do is just some course of action such as periodical thinning, to create a situation where it is possible to coexist with the forest. Just as you should not disturb calm water, di-」
(Souma) At that time, one of the woodcraft mice that was in the middle of searching had found something.

「There it is! A mother and a child!」(Souma)

「Wh-Where are they!?」(Robthor)

「Wait.....The location is 2 meters at front and diagonally to the left from the collapsing private house on the ridge!」(Souma) The soil and sand at that location were removed in a hurry. There, in a gap between collapsed timbers, we found a girl and a woman that looked like her

mother. I believed the mother tried to protect the girl by hugging her tightly with her arms. When Robthor-san saw both of them, he tried to shout something but his voice didn't come out. I believed this girl and woman were his wife and daughter.

When we had pulled out the woman and examined her, she was already dead.

Were we too late..... When I was thinking this, Aisha shouted.

「Your Majesty! The girl is still breathing!」(Aisha) 「Bring her to the rescue party quickly! Don't let her die no matter what!」(Souma)
「Understood, Your Majesty」(Aisha)

After I saw off Aisha who departed while carrying the girl wrapped in blanket, I looked at Robthor who had broken down crying in front of his wife's lifeless body. Although, I had thought maybe it was better to leave him alone, this person still had someone to protect. It would be a problem if he just stood still in this place. I put my hand on his shoulder and gently spoke to him.

「Your wife; has protected your daughter to the end.」(Souma) 「.....Yes. I, she..... a wife better than I deserved.....」(Robthor) 「Pull yourself together! She has entrusted the daughter to you. Now it is your part to do something.」(Souma) 「! Yes.....Yes.....」(Robthor)

Robthor-san nodded repeatedly while his voice shook with sobbing.

After a while, I received a report that the second relief party, the one that Liecia, whom returned back to capital, organized had arrived.



After all missing persons had been accounted for, the advance rescue unit was relieved from their duty.

After this, the second party that had both equipment and personnel would take over the repair work.

In the end, the advance rescue party lifted up a silent prayer for the victims and then would return to the capital. Everyone from the advance

rescue party was completely exhausted as they packed themselves into the container like tuna being transported in a freezer truck. Hal was currently resting in Kaede-chan's lap pillow (thanks to magic, she didn't have any physical fatigue), while being dead tired.

I was also in the same condition, but as expected since it won't do for a king to be packed inside a container, I boarded the prepared carriage with Liecia. Aisha stayed behind. As expected, with her hometown in such conditions, she wouldn't be able to concentrate on her duty. That's why I told her to remain in the God-Protected Forest for a while.

While I leaned against the carriage window and fell into a doze, 「This time, I couldn't do anything.」(Liecia)

I heard Liecia's sad sounding words.

「You called a relief party, right? Everyone has done their best.」(Souma)
「Souma.....」(Liecia)

「Or rather it was me..... who feels powerless this time.」(Souma)
「That's not possible. I heard that you played a big part at the disaster site.」(Liecia) At Liecia's follow up comment, I shook my head.

「My position is that of a king. In the case of an emergency, giving directions at a disaster site is not the duty of a king. The duty of a king is to put preparations in advance before the emergency “occurs”. I had been negligent in this part.....」(Souma) 「But that.....」(Liecia)

「Although I believed that the Royal Army had succeeded in their role as relief party, however there still many inadequate points remaining. The means of communication, the means for long distance transportation, emergency storage of relief supplies at each region, medical team attachments in relief parties, training psychiatrists to give counseling for PTSD[3] patients..... Everything was insufficient. This situation developed because of my negligence in only focusing my eyes on the food shortage and problem of the Three Dukes.」(Souma) I looked at my weary laden countenance reflected at the window.

(Hey “You”. Aren't you king? Aren't you bearing a lot on your shoulders?) Maybe, if every problem had been settled, afterwards.....

I saw the reflection of Liecia looking at me with a worried expression in the window, however I pretended not to notice it.

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[1] Actually the ojiisan use nanodesu to end several of his sentence. I don't know if it was a verbal tic like Kaede or not. Even so, I won't render an ojiisan's tic... (ED: What, not enough moe? Lol.

<https://youtu.be/FNTNeodLUuQ?t=29s>) [2] ロブトール=ウドガルド

Robutooru Udogarudo

[3] Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental disorder that can develop after a person is exposed to a traumatic event, such as sexual assault, warfare, traffic collisions, or other threats on a person's life. Symptoms may include disturbing thoughts, feelings, or dreams related to the events, mental or physical distress to trauma-related cues, attempts to avoid trauma-related cues, alterations in how a person thinks and feels, and increased arousal. These symptoms last for more than a month after the event. Young children are less likely to show distress but instead may express their memories through play. Those with PTSD are at a higher risk of suicide.

If you suspect yourself or someone close to you exhibit this symptoms, please bring them to psychiatrist.

Epilogue: Three Dukes Conference Those Who Wriggle Like Worms Stage With Many Scriptwrights A

The central city of the Carmine Duchy, [Randell].

In the meeting hall of the Army General Georg Carmine's castle located further inside it, right now, the Three Dukes leading this country's Army, Navy, and Air Force, were gathered.

Now sitting in the seat of honor is the lord of this castle Duke Georg Carmine, as the General of the Army. He was a beastman with a muscular, burly body visible from over his military uniform and the head of a lion, and looks to be a prime example of a long serving military man. His age had gone past fifty¹ but he does not show signs of weakening at all. During this meeting he displays a firm posture without moving a single eyebrow.

¹ A beastman's lifespan is no different to a human's

Sitting at Georg's right was the admiral of the navy, Duchess Ecksel Walter. She was a beautiful mizuchi woman wearing garments similar to Japanese clothes, and had small deer horns peeking out of her blue hair. Mizuchi are a race that live for over a thousand years and she too was over 500 years in age. Nevertheless, her appearance is that of a twenty year old. She was a woman with both wisdom and beauty but she seemed right now rather irate.

Sitting opposite her is the Marshall of the Air Force Duke Castor Vargas. He looks to be a gallant young man, but he was a dragonewt with two demonlike horns growing out of his red hair and two membrane wings growing from his back. He was 100 years old but because dragonewts live up to 500 years old he was treated as a youngster. It is said about long-lived races that one's mental age is proportional to one's appearance. Nevertheless, the all-too-young Ecksel was an exception among exceptions. Also, he was visibly pouting. Watching the two's

attitude, Ecksel sighed.

“..... I thought that this meeting was about avoiding a pointless fight?”

“What granny? You’re getting scared now?”

Castor snapped at Ecksel

“A mizuchi being scared of a normal human, Duchess Walter, are you going senile?”

“..... Ara, I wonder who was the old woman maniac who was making passes at me fifty years ago?”

“Uguu”

“Also, if you want to call me it’s ‘mother-in-law’, not granny, right?”

“..... yes”

Being talked to so playfully, Castor became dejected. In truth, Ecksel was the target of Castor’s puppy love, and perhaps because he never forgot his magnificent defeat, he fell in love and married her daughter Accella who was close to his age he met later. Which means because Castor was Ecksel’s son-in-law, she was an opponent he could never win against due to his position.

“Castor, Are you going to defy the king?”

“Of course I am! I don’t care if he’s a hero or whatever, that false king usurped the crown, compelled Princess Liecia to marriage, and took over the country! That’s plenty of reason to defy him!”

“The ones who said that were only the nobles who ran from being questioned for injustice. Abdicating the throne was by Alberto-dono’s own will, and his relations with Princess Liecia is harmonious”

“Even so, where’s the reason he has to be king! If he wants to rebuild the country he can do it as a vassal! Was there a problem with the previous king’s rule?”

“..... (There were no problems but the fact that there was nothing good about it was itself a problem)”

So Ecksel thought, but because it was too irreverent towards the previous king, she didn't say it out loud. Ecksel felt dubious towards Alberto's sudden abdication, but seeing the changes afterwards, she could call it decisive judgement. The King Alberto in Ecksel's memory was not a lord capable of such judgement but he had experienced some growth of his own.

"To begin with, I don't like how he's looking down on us Three Dukes who's been protecting the country through the long years. He sent a letter saying [choose whether to obey me or not] didn't he?"

"Though he did say [If you cooperate with my reforms I will give food aid and lay roads into your territory] ..."

In truth, it was an attractive proposal. Because the Three Duchies had fewer population than the royal domains and held stores for maintaining troops, their food problems weren't so severe. But even though there were few deaths from starvation, economic losses were more terrible than the royal domains. On the verge of the food crisis, the Three Duchies opened the military stores and rationed them, but because of that the food sellers who lost demand were first to go bankrupt. Then because employment went down, shops who couldn't sell their goods became bankrupt, and the chain continues with workshops that provide those shops with goods also going bankrupt.

At that point, Soma weathered the storm by only handing out aid to the poor, not giving more rations than necessary², and promoting the eating of foods heretofore not customarily eaten, thereby reducing the scale of the economic downturn as small as possible. Also, because only the Walter Duchy among the Three Duchies possessed their own maritime trade routes they were able to stop the chain just barely by selling the unsold goods abroad.

² He does not have much reserves to do that to begin with.

(But that is only possible because my territory had port towns. Both Carmine's and Vargas' territories are inland and neither have trade routes. The Carmine Duchy in particular has a large army and is

sheltering the fled nobles and their personal armies, so they should have the heaviest economic problems. So I wonder why does Georg so obstinately resist the king) While she was thinking that, Castor roared.

“So he says [I’ll feed you so obey me]!? He’s looking down on us!”

“If it’s for the people ... it can’t be helped, no?”

“I don’t like it! He thinks he can get us in line with bait!”

“Even the king won’t be needing a pet who only has pride, though”

As Ecksel said that, BAM, Castor hit the table.

“..... What are you on about! It’s like you’re actually supporting the king! Didn’t you reject his appeal because you didn’t like that king as well!?”

“Don’t paint us with the same brush. What we Mizuchi value the most is the peace of our beloved [Lagoon City]. We’re prepared to obey if that is guaranteed”

The mizuchi’s sense of value, including Ecksel, was rather peculiar.

The Mizuchi gave priority to thinking of the [Lagoon City] above all else. The ancestors of the Mizuchi once lived in one of the Nine Head Dragon Islands, but they were defeated in a war for hegemony over the islands and were cast out to sea, wandering around as pirates. The base that the ancestors finally built at the end of their long wanderings was what later became [Lagoon City]. The Mizuchi had pride in the land they finally obtained, they loved the land, and they steadfastly protected it. One of the reasons they participated in the wars of the founding of this multiethnic nation Elfrieden was in order to protect [Lagoon City].

“For the sake of [Lagoon City] we would wag our tails to anyone, if anyone were to threaten [Lagoon City] we would destroy them no matter who they are. This is the pride of the Mizuchi”

“Hmph, wagging your tails is pride?”

“Yes. We will fight for the sake of the things we must protect. We’re not children who would throw a tantrum just because we don’t like

something. If we can settle it by talking, then it is better to do just that. It's already foolish as it is to have an internal war now when the neighboring countries are aiming for their chance."

"..... The Principality of Amidonia, is it?"

The Principality of Amidonia, the country right to the west of Elfrieden.

Having lost almost half of its territory on the receiving end of the antepenultimate³ king of Elfrieden's expansion policy, the Principality of Amidonia bided their time to regain their lost territory. Fully intent on intervening with the current confrontation between Soma and the Three Dukes, they already sent missives to the Three Dukes that [they are prepared to send reinforcements should they want to subjugate the false king].

³ «TN: previous of previous, i.e. the Queen's father, the king before Alberto»

"Sheesh, what an obstinate bunch. It's completely obvious what they want"

"I'm sure they've sent the same thing to the king as well. I don't think the king will accept it either but they might send the "reinforcements" in anyway. You understand right? The folly of this war?"

"Keh. Then shouldn't you hurry up and wag your tail at the king?"

"I'll do that once I made sure of certain things. About the king, and about you, too"

Ecksel turned her eyes towards Georg Carmine who was still silent. He has been having his eyes closed ever since they came into this room and exchanged a light greeting, not saying a single word. Was he listening to Ecksel and Walter's complaining, or was he having some thoughts of his own? He couldn't possibly be sleeping ... Ecksel was feeling irritated because of his attitude.

"Georg, what are you thinking?"

"... About what?"

“Ara, so you were awake. Of course, I’m talking about the reason why you who should have been the most patriotic and loyal out of all of us here, are acting hostile towards the new king”

“General Georg doesn’t like that false king either, doesn’t he?”

“I’m not asking you Castor. Answer me Georg. Regardless of him being a false king or whatever, his rule was peaceful. Why did you deliberately shake things up?”

Put under Ecksel’s questioning, Georg solemnly opened his mouth.

“Because I have judged that the king will not rule this country peacefully. That is all”

“Why? Do you have a problem with the abilities of the king who is even now overcoming the food and economic difficulties ravaging the country?”

“To that end, the king unhesitantly rejects a lot of things”

Georg opened his eyes. Just that was enough to cause the air to become prickly. That atmosphere made Ecksel and Castor gulp. Georg was the youngest out of everyone here but in appearance and mind he was the most mature. He had the presence of the country’s number one military man.

“I hear that the king was summoned from another world. Thus for having no attachment to those things to begin with, he unhesitantly throws them away. He throws anything inefficient away, be it history, traditions, soldiers, or vassals. Am I wrong, Lady Ecksel?”

“Well...”

Ecksel was at loss for words. King Soma’s rule can certainly be seen that way.

“The king threw away the vassals who long served the country”

“Did he not do that because they were corrupt?”

“So much as to even antagonize them? Lady Ecksel, you yourself said just now that it is folly to put the country at risk. It was the king that

sowed the seeds of that”

“Even though it’s you who’s sheltering those nobles?”

“Those who bear grudges against the king are the perfect pawns to use against him. Of course, I don’t intend to let them back after the war”

Georg’s face contorted into a smile as he said that, making Ecksel shudder.

(This man is planning to use the corrupt nobles to death in this war!?) Defeat the king, use the corrupt nobles to death, and if they still don’t die, find faults and punish them for it. They were people with lots of faults. Thus, the capital will be cleared of the king faction and corrupt nobles. What remains then will only be an empty lot that he can do whatever he pleases with. He could reinstate King Alberto as a puppet, or even put himself up as king.

Ecksel stood up

“Do you have ambitions for the throne, Georg!”

“O, oi. Calm down. This is the deeply loyal Lord Carmine we’re talking about. He can’t be thinking about usurping the throne, right?”

With Castor mediating between them, Georg silently nodded.

“Of course, after expelling King Soma I will restore King Alberto, we will be supporting him”

“I wonder about that”

Ecksel sat back down. She was pretending to be calm but inside, she was perplexed.

(This is worse than I thought. The worst case scenario ... I suppose I have to work with the assumption that Lord Carmine and Amidonia are colluding behind the scenes. Kuh, if only Castor had proper judgment the two of us could rein him in ...) Ecksel felt bitter towards her son-in-law’s imprudence. She had her daughter Accella and the granddaughter born from her Carla with him. She was uneasy at letting Lord Carmine win, but she was the only one in the king faction here. If King Soma won what

would happen to the traitor Castor's wife and daughter, Accella and Carla? By this country's law the kinsmen of the criminal up to the third degree would be considered guilty of the same crime. By cutting familial ties with Castor she could avoid her entire family being implicated, but what about Accella and Carla ...

"Castor"

"What"

"Cut your ties with Accella and Carla"

"!? You think I'm going to lose against that youngling!"

"Just in case. You have to be prepared for that if you're going against the country"

Ecksel gave Georg a fleeting glance but he only silently closed his eyes as if to say he won't intervene. Even though they were talking about him getting defeated ... could this be self confidence?

On the other hand, Castor who was told to divorce his wife and daughter looked troubled.

"Accella aside ... it wouldn't be possible with Carla"

"Why!?"

".... She won't listen even if I told her to"

That moment, the hall's doors opened with a bang.

The one who threw the door open and entered was a young girl with a deeply impressive beauty, fiery red hair, and golden pupils. She looked to be 16 or 17 years of age. She was wearing a set of metallic-red heavy armor, and had a pair of dragon wings and a tail on her back and behind. Seeing her imposing form, Ecksel received a headache.

"Carla ..."

She was Castor's daughter, Carla. Her appearance was that of a fair maiden, much like Ecksel and Accella, but her character was that of one that would succeed Castor's bloodline, which is in a word, "rough".

Despite being of marriagable age there was no femininity to her at all. She was a stubborn manly woman who spends time with naught but practice with the Air Force Castor leads. There were many noble and knightly sons who courted her but she would bluster them that “I have no interest in someone weaker than me”

In truth, her personal combat ability was second in the Air Force to Castor, and all the men who courted her had the tables turned on them. It was complex for Castor; as a “male parent” he was relieved but as a “father” he was worried whether or not it was too late for her.

It can't be helped that Ecksel had a bad feeling when that Carla appeared here. Then just as she thought, what came out from Carla's mouth was...

“Grandmother! If father decides to fight, then I'll fight as well!”

She declared. Ecksel popped a vein and yelled.

“You will do no such thing! Are you planning to become a traitor at your age!”

“I won't forgive him for deposing King Alberto and trying to rape my dear friend Liecia! I will punish him myself for this insolence!”

“You are mistaken! King Soma ...”

“Ah— ... It's no use, mother-in-law. Carla's stubborn when she's like this”

Castor shrugged his shoulders,

“Both of you ... Good grief ...”

Ecksel made a sour face, but even now, Georg kept his silence to the end.

Epilogue: Three Dukes Conference Those Who Wriggle Like Worms Stage With Many Scriptwrights B

Van: the Capital City of the Amidonia Dukedom.

The Amidonia Dukedom's territory had an uneven width and length, and its capital city was located on the eastern side of that territory. Because the capital city could be considered as being located too close to the national border with the Elfrieden Kingdom, this might be why they haven't given up on recovering their lost eastern territory. In a government affairs room located in the castle in the center of Van, a middle aged man with a Kaiser Beard[1] was reading a letter. His mantle-covered body appeared stout, however, because he had wide shoulders, he didn't look obese. Perhaps below that mantle, he was full of muscle.

That man was Gaius VIII, Duke of Amidonia.

「Oh.....」(Gaius)

「Is something wrong, father?」(Gaius' Son)

From his side, a young man in an army uniform inquired him. He had a handsome face however, his eyes radiated a chill light that somehow made his appearance look cold. It could be said that, his eyes themselves practically showed that he, Julius Amidonia, the Ducal Prince of the Amidonia Dukedom, inherited the coldhearted temperament of his father.

Gaius presented the letter so Julius could read.

「It's from Georg Carmine. It seemed he has finally "risen".」(Gaius)

「Oh, he finally did it. I heard that he was popular as someone who did things swiftly without delay when he was young. But it seemed that the person now has quite a heavy waist.」(Julius) 「It might be because he has grown old. Although if he still has his wisdom, then he wouldn't partake in our invitation.」(Gaius) 「Indeed.....」(Julius)

Julius handed back the letter to Gaius.

「Together with the war proclamation to the new king, execute the plan. Send the “reinforcements” to the Kingdom.」(Gaius) 「Oh..... to which side?」(Julius)

「Which side? Of course it would be reported to the new king's side as 『Reinforcements for the Three Dukes side』 and to the Three Dukes side as 『Reinforcements for the New King side』.」(Gaius) 「I see, we don't have any obligation to abide to either side after all.」(Julius) 「Kukuku, that's right.」(Gaius)

Gaius and Julius exchanged a dark laugh with each other.

But there were someone who looked at them with cold eyes.

(Goodness gracious..... Father-dono and my stupid brother are so embarrassing.) (Gaius' Daughter) It was a girl who shifted her eyes away indifferently. Her age was about 18. Her face resembled the handsome face of her brother Julius, however the coldheartedness didn't overly exude out. Rather, her eyes were like chestnuts and she had a round face that was as lovely as a tanuki doll.[2] Her long hair was tied into two braids at her nape level, the so-called twin-tail style. That girl is this country's First Ducal Princess, Roroa Amidonia. Although contrary to her appearance, her mind held quite a wicked tongue.

(Does this stupid father and son pair intend to trim this country's lifespan, that was already short even under normal circumstances, even more?) (Roroa) The Amidonia Dukedom is a mountainous country. It has a lot of metal resources, however on other hand, it had little arable land so it always has food supply issues. The neighboring Elfrieden Kingdom had a serious food shortage, however this country didn't reach that level. After all, if the harvest failed for even little a bit, then there will be people starving to death.[3]

(It's not like I don't understand Father-dono's wish to possess bountiful land even for just a bit. That is right, but Father-dono had used all the funds that I had raised after so much trouble and sank them into military spending.) (Roroa) Roroa grinded her teeth.

This Roroa, while being this country's princess, she also held an

outstanding business acumen, and so supported this country's entire financial affair from the shadow. She made the economy circulate trade with another country, tightened the export of raw resources to another country, and gave favors and promoted the industries to produce processed goods for export.[4] Her ability was something that would be desired by any other country. It could be said that this country, which was in the brink of economic disaster, didn't undergo economic collapse thanks to Rorora's quick wittedness.

However, Gaius and his cronies didn't make the best use of the situation that had resulted from Rorora's quick wittedness.

(Even though using the hard-earned funds to promote industry would allow them acquire more funds, this economy-blind war-idiot father and son pair only spent it on military spending. The troublesome thing is that they seriously believed in 『By strengthening the military, they could obtain anything』. How absurdly, ridiculously, ludicrously foolish! If they used the funds, collected the profit, and repeated this cycle, then there would be some meaning to it. Only spending it? Isn't it only a waste!? The thing is, even if I screamed this out, would the old man even hear it.....?)(Rorora) 「Hey, Rorora what do you think?」(Julius)

「Yes brother.」(*smile*)(Rorora)

Being suddenly mentioned, Rorora answered while forcing an insincere smile.

She actually didn't hear their talk at all.....

(.....This country might hold too many hopeless points, right.....
Aaaaah, I envy Elfrieden. Since the population is large, then the capital that can be used is also large. Really, isn't this like envying the wallet of a neighbor.....Wallet?)(Rorora) At that point, Rorora realized something.

(If I envy the neighbor's wallet then.....wouldn't it better if I join my wallet to it? Furthermore, in the most legitimate way as possible..... can this be done?..... Un, this might succeed. For this, I need to contact the gramps-sama who guards Nelva.....)(Rorora) While muttering to herself, Rorora began to polish a plan. High risk, high gain. Rorora, who started to

begin the ploy of her life time, sported a smile. In this regard, she was a bit similar to her father and brother.



Parnam, the Capital City of the Elfrieden Kingdom.

In a government affairs room at Parnam Castle, I heard the latest report about the food problem from Hakuya.

「Based on the documents, the autumn harvest is satisfactorily within our expectations. Furthermore, owing to the transportation network that Your Majesty had laid out, the number of people and amount of traffic has increased, and goods started to flow to the entire nation from the surplus regions. Of course, this also include foodstuffs. With this, we may consider that from this time on, the food problem has been resolved, more or less.」(Hakuya) 「Then, this is good news. It is worthy that our hard work has led to this result.」(Souma) It has been a longtime, but with this, I can finally take a breather. Because I had been dealing with this problem most of the time, I personally have a very deep emotional attachment to it. However, 「Yes. With this, we could be at ease to proceed to “the next stage”.」(Hakuya) While ignoring my sentimental time, Hakuya spoke out.

The next stage, right?

「As expected..... We must do it, right?」(Souma)

「Do you feel reluctant?」(Hakuya)

「Well, you know. Even though I know this is something necessary, but.....」(Souma) Yes. This is necessary.

The political thinker Machiavelli had said in the 『De Principatibus』: 『If a Ruler has a hand in a cruel act, even during a in time of peace, then it would put his position in jeopardy. However, even when some Rulers didn't restrain themselves from cruelty, there aren't any rebellions among his subjects or attacks by foreign enemies. This is because of a difference in whether a Ruler's usage of cruelty is well-used or poorly-used.』

『A skilled person would immediately act cruel when a danger to him

had arrived. After he used it, he would decisively abandon the cruel act and thereafter returned to the governing manner that was in accordance to the public interest as much as possible. Then, he will be called a wise Ruler. If conversely, he struck the root of evil in the beginning, and afterwards dragged it on and the cruel acts were used repeatedly, then this would be an unskilled usage of cruelty.』[5]

(Excerpt of *De Principatibus* Chapter VIII. Especially Parable of Agathocles) Because of this sentence, Machiavelli's 『*De Principatibus*』 had been long criticized by the Christian Church and humanitarians. It recommended the Ruler to employ "Cruel Acts". Certainly, if someone had read this at first glance, then they would say that this was a tremendously terrible thing. Love and Peace. Besides, wouldn't it all be better if everything resolved with Love? However, things didn't happen that way in the Real World. If someone remembered this fact and then read that sentence again, then they would understand how Machiavelli's ideas conformed to reality more.

The "Cruelty" mentioned here isn't something like massacring innocent civilians. A good use of Machiavellism is something like thoroughly removing all of one's political opponents. Just through one act of cruelty will stabilize one's political power, and if a stable political power can be achieved, then the citizens would also become happy. Conversely, if he couldn't pull off the policy well, then his political opponent would show their face and then, if he didn't strike them down right from the start, then he would need to repeat enforcements against rebellions numerous times and lose the trust of his citizens.

To cite a concrete example, the Italian condottiero[6] Cesare Borgia, who Machiavelli extolled as an ideal ruler, built a firm position after killing the influential noble who invited him to a banquet.[7] Uesugi Kenshin's[8] successor, Uesugi Kagekatsu[9], destroyed his younger brother-in-law, Uesugi Kagetora[10], in the succession struggle, but afterwards he lived as a loyal person and earned a reputation as a 『Honorable』 military commander.

Oda Nobunaga's case is a little unique. He didn't hesitate in using

cruelty and used it cleverly, and it might could be said that his cruelty was well used since he suddenly catapulted himself into a strong daimyo in such a short span of time.[11] However, eventually the prolonged cruelty shortened his thread of life, as he was betrayed by his retainer and lost his life. So it couldn't be helped to say that he had used cruelty poorly.

To sum it up, “cruelty” is a last resort sword[12] that could sever anything for the Ruler, but it is also a cursed sword that can possess him if used too much and sooner or later would bring destruction onto him.

「It is just like what you said earlier. Your plan will decide this cruelty.」
(Souma) 「Yes. And then I will precede with your words 『If possible, finish it in one blow』.」(Hakuya) 「Can you do it?」(Souma)

「Certainly.」(Hakuya)

「Then that's good.」(Souma)

Although it might be said that “it was for this country”, I didn't have any great attachments to this country.

It also wasn't for justice or a great cause.

But when I thought “what I do this for?”, Liecia and the others' faces appeared in my mind.

The face of Liecia, Aisha, and Juna-san who laughed and cried for this country.

.....Yes. This is enough for me.

If it was for the sake of the smiles of Liecia and the others whom I cared, then I will become a cruel king for just this once.

「The “conquest” will now begin.」 (Souma)



In the future, this war was known as 『Five Days War』, then some years later, a reporter interviewed Souma about this. He made a wry smile before he began to narrate.

『It is the truth that I and Hakuya were the scriptwriters for that war. However, before I noticed it, it was Hakuya and I who were manipulated to dance on the stage..... Ah, that's right. That war's scriptwriters were not only us. That's true..... I think at least there were about three others? Now that you mentioned it, I think the war reached such an ending due to such a superbly unusual concurrence that happened.』(Souma) At the end of that interview, Souma grumbled in a low voice.

『In the end, I wonder who was the best scriptwriter.....』(Souma)

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[1] A type of beard popularized by Austrian and German Kaiser like Wilhelm I and Franz Joseph I. Das Original Kaiserbart.

[2] No wait, what? Why tanuki? (E/N: Tanuki is love. Tanuki is life. Gekkan Shoujo says so.) Damn you Maeno!

[3] This is sarcasm? (E/N: I don't get it either....)

[4] In case you didn't know: It would be more profitable for a country to export processed goods than raw resources, since processed goods sell for more.

[5] So a certain nation attacks another nation and as a result, the whole region fucked up so badly that violence happened every day is an example of Cruelty used badly. You know what I mean.

[6] For lack of better words: In Renaissance Italy, condottiero meant "contractor", and was synonymous with the modern English title Mercenary Captain. A condottiero is the leader of mercenaries contracted by a city state.

[7] I don't know what event that the author referred in this, due to my lack of knowledge of Renaissance Papal States.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cesare_Borgia

(He is referring to the death of Giovanni Borgia, who was rumored to have been killed by his younger brother Cesare, after leaving a feast.

Fun fact: Machiavelli both praised & warned against Cesare, since Cesare "planned for every situation except his own illness" AND Cesare's power depended on who the Pope was. Cesare's Pope was his worst enemy since his first choice, the ally Pope, died a month after becoming the Pope. New Pope fucked Cesare over at every opportunity & outwitted every plan of his.) [8] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uesugi_Kenshin Uesugi Kenshin is a famous sengoku general.

[9] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uesugi_Kagekatsu

[10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uesugi_Kagetora

[11] To put it into reader perspective: Nobunaga consolidated his power in 1559 after eliminating all opposition in his clan and Owari Province. In 1560 he defeated Imagawa Yoshimoto in Battle of Okehazama and established himself as one of the strongest daimyo in Central Japan.

[12] Originally: Heirloom Sword. You don't use an heirloom sword for combat, so it is only a weapon of last resort. (E/N: Like Touken Ranbu? :3c Mikazuki Munechika is the cutest~.) Quite so, after all heirloom sword is too precious to be stained by blood.

Illustrations



『唯才令』によって集められた多種“多才”な五人——。



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